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ABSTRACT

A survey of older students received responses from 4,461 people aged 60 or over in four European countries: United Kingdom, West Germany, France, and Belgium. The questionnaire had three sections: students' background; information on study methods, time spent, organization of work, and use of study aids; and Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI). Striking similarities were found between respondents in all four countries, despite national and institutional differences. Older students had been learners throughout life and exhibited similarities in educational experience. A majority of respondents had chosen their principal subject of study in the humanities or foreign languages. Respondents in the four countries generally agreed about why they were continuing to study after age 60. The most frequently mentioned reasons were to keep the mind active, to develop an interest in an area, and to achieve personal development. Older students appeared to be highly motivated, well organized, hardworking, and capable of adapting to course demands. Responses to the ASI showed a preference for study based on comprehension and finding relationships. Future policy issues for education were identified: a new profile of aging, active participation, access to adult education for older students, teaching and learning methods, intergenerational issues, changing concepts of retirement, and positive contributions. Appendixes include data tables, 67-item bibliography, and instrument. (16 figures; 49 tables in text and appendices) (YLB)

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OLDER STUDENTS IN EUROPE

A survey of older students in four European countries

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OLDER STUDENTS IN EUROPE

A survey of older students in four European countries

by

The European Older Students Research Group

edited by
Stephanie Clennell

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Regional Academic Services

The Open University

1990

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Introduction

Older people may soon make up a quarter of the population of Western Europe, life expectation is increasing and most people will spend several decades of their lives in what is at present considered as retirement. Now is the time to reconsider the roles and capacities of older people. This report is one of a growing number of studies in this field.

We present here the results of a study of 4461 people aged 60 and over in four European countries—Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom—people all actively engaged in learning.

This report is the fourth in a series of studies. The Open University Older Students Research Group in 1984 published a description of students aged 60 and over in the Open University, and in 1987 a report on older students in a selection of United Kingdom institutions representing the main providers of education for adults. Work on older learners was already being done in other European countries, and this common interest brought together an international group from four countries, to plan a collaborative study using a common procedure and questionnaire. A report on the study of older students in Germany appeared separately in 1988. This latest report presents the findings from the data from all four countries.

The members of the international group which planned and carried out the survey come from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Université de Nantes, Université des Sciences Sociales de Toulouse, Universität Oldenburg, and Giessen, and the Open University Older Students Research Group.

The group acknowledges with gratitude the funding which made the work possible: for the Open University reports, the Open University Research Committee, UDACE, and Regional Academic Services, The Open University; for the German report, the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society; for the processing of all the data from four countries, the European Cultural Foundation; and for preparation and production of the final report, the Commission for the European Communities. Generous encouragement and administrative support has been given throughout by Regional Academic Services, Open University.

The study could not have been made without the help of the thousands of students who gave their time and attention to the questionnaire, nor without the help of all those administrators and teachers who assisted with its distribution, and whose contribution is acknowledged at the end of this report.

Much evidence now supports the view that activity contributes to older people's health and satisfaction with life. This report gives an account of a detailed survey of some thousands of people in Europe who were being active as students. It shows how they were responding to the need to continue their personal development, and suggests the capacity they have to serve the community. As *students* they are in a minority in their generation; but if we substitute for *studying* the broader concept of learning, we can draw from their experience lessons which are applicable to a much wider section of the population. Our respondents represent a minority, but they do not represent an élite; they cannot, for instance, be characterised by the occupational group from which they retired. All our respondents belong to generations which were particularly disadvantaged by restricted opportunities for education during childhood, and by the upheavals caused by the pre-war depression, the 1939–1945 war, and its aftermath. They are people who have succeeded in confronting and overcoming difficulties.

We believe that this has been the largest enquiry of its kind that has been made to date and that it is the first international study of its kind. It is not, however, based on a representative sample of all kinds of education for adults in the four

countries. The 1985 Open University study in the United Kingdom did include the whole range of provision from university to leisure activities. The international study has incorporated this material, but the other contributions have come from recent innovations in adult education: from the Open University, the Universities of the Third Age and from the Fernuniversität, which were all launched in the 1970s, and from the provision which followed the opening of traditional German universities to older students in the 1980s. Most of our respondents therefore were older people who had taken advantage of these new opportunities. Our selection of organisations also offers an insight into traditional and non-traditional institutions and methods. The detailed data contribute substantial evidence for application to both theory and practice in provision for the elderly. We suggest therefore that our findings should be of interest to all those concerned with education for adults, in the context of life-long learning, and also to many organisations studying older people, their role in society and their individual needs.

Note: All percentages are rounded in the Tables and in the text.

TABLE 1

Populations Age 60 and Over

		BRD		*France*		*Belgium*		UK	
Total population		61,077,042		55,630,136		9,927,612		57,065,339	
Age									
60–64	*M*	1,396,196		1,355,227		265,620		1,410,692	
	F	1,925,187		1,537,511		295,249		1,529,434	
	Total	3,321,383	5%	2,892,738	5%	560,869	6%	2,940,126	5%
65–69	*M*	1,010,315		1,045,548		225,537		1,309,858	
	F	1,639,067		1,274,011		272,667		1,555,278	
	Total	2,649,382	4%	2,319,559	4%	498,204	5%	2,865,136	5%
70–74	*M*	832,189		669,449		124,810		918,480	
	F	1,489,474		934,283		174,079		1,247,296	
	Total	2,321,663	4%	1,603,732	3%	298,889	3%	2,165,776	4%
75–79	*M*	742,136		676,082		117,878		715,843	
	F	1,484,489		1,087,163		196,499		1,144,442	
	Total	2,226,625	4%	1,763,245	3%	314,377	3%	1,860,285	3%
80–84	*M*	424,156		409,893		66,133		392,343	
	F	950,908		797,882		139,692		803,830	
	Total	1,375,064	2%	1,207,775	2%	205,825	2%	1,196,173	2%
85+	*M*	193,913		228,822		35,493		195,621	
	F	581,062		639,267		97,808		600,038	
	Total	774,975	1%	868,089	1%	133,301	1%	795,659	1%
Totals 60+									
	M	4,598,905		4,385,021		835,471		4,942,837	
	F	8,070,187		6,270,117		1,175,994		6,880,318	
	Total	12,669,092		10,655,138		2,011,465		11,823,155	
		21%		20%		20%		21%	

Sources: BRD: 1987—Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden
France: 1987 (INSEE)—Evaluation basée sur le recensement de 1982
Belgium: 1989—I.N.S. Population du Registre National
UK: mid-1988—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Percentages are those of the total population of each country rounded to 1%.

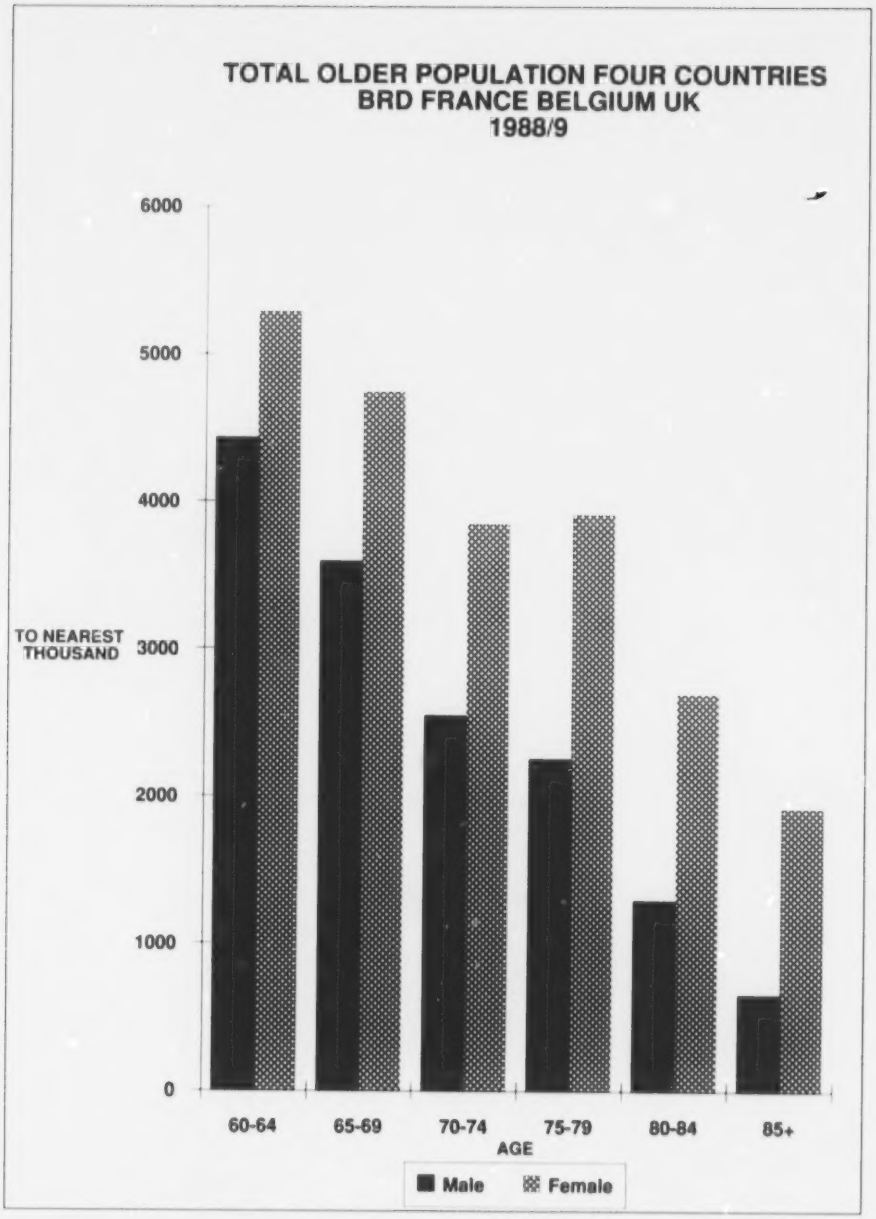
TOTAL OLDER POPULATION FOUR COUNTRIES
BRD FRANCE BELGIUM UK
1988/9
TO NEAREST THOUSAND
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
60-64
65-69
70-74
75-79
80-84
85+
AGE
Male
Female

FIGURE 1

1

Educational Opportunities for Older Students in Four European Countries

1. General Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the findings presented in the chapters which follow, by giving some basic data and by describing the adult education provision to which those findings relate. There have been and remain significant differences in the way in which educational opportunities for older adults are provided in each of the four countries. Each of our respondents had chosen particular study opportunities from amongst the range of options available in his or her country and their responses have to be seen against this background. In addition, the scope of our enquiries was different in each of the four countries, as is explained in the sections dealing with those enquiries. The order of presentation is United Kingdom, West Germany, France and Belgium as this is the order in which the surveys were carried out.

2. Adult Education in the United Kingdom

Introduction

In 1988 the estimated population of the United Kingdom was just about 57 million. 11.2 million or 21% were over 60. In 1985/6 4.5 million people were following full or part-time education courses.[1] At present the proportion of older people following educational courses is unknown, though some data for particular institutions are given below. An informed guess for the national figure of students over 60 in some relatively formal institutions in the United Kingdom might be 300,000.

2.1. HISTORY

In the United Kingdom the nineteenth century saw the beginning in adult education of co-operation between local voluntary organisations and university teachers and other specialists. At the beginning of the twentieth century some universities created special extra-mural departments for adult education. In 1903 the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) was formed, with branches not only in large towns, but also in small towns and villages; extra-mural and WEA teaching was, and still is, done by professional teachers, but the local organisation is normally done mainly by volunteers. The WEA has always worked closely with universities. Since 1902 elected local authorities have had the power to provide adult education facilities. Their programmes now include not only academic and practical skills, but also leisure activities and sports. Many other voluntary organisations also do work of an educational nature. There is therefore in the United Kingdom a long tradition of provision of adult education by universities and other public bodies working together with voluntary organisations and depending on local initiatives.

Since 1971 the Open University (OU) has provided another and novel form of access. More recently the Universities of the Third Age (U3As) with their flexible approach to recruiting adults in later middle age, have come to provide a largely self-generated programme of lectures, discussion groups and field trips. They have fewer formal contacts with the educational system than is the case in some European countries. The majority of U3As in the UK belong to a national organisation, the Third Age Trust.

2.2. ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR OLDER STUDENTS

2.2.1. University education.

For most of this century any adult with the qualifications for university entry could study for a university degree as an external student of London University, using private study, a correspondence course or, in some cases, courses at a local college. Other universities have offered a small number of places to mature students, and the number has increased in recent years.

The main opportunity for university study, however, came with the start of the Open University. Students over 18 can follow a university degree programme; no qualifications whatsoever are required for entry. The number of places available for new students each year is normally about 25,000 and these are allotted according to the date of the student's application. An applicant who is prepared to wait a year or more will eventually get a place. The only problem may be fees, although there are grants for people with very low incomes and the unemployed. Around 5% of Open University students are aged 60 or over.

2.2.2. Adult education

Entry to all other courses for adults is unrestricted, except by a limitation of numbers for very popular courses and for some technical and professional courses which require entry qualifications. Otherwise choice is limited only by the availability of courses locally; for some students the ability to pay the fees; and for some health and travel difficulties in reaching centres. Older students can, if they wish, follow an examinable course, because the subject interests them, without any obligation to take the examination. In all local authority areas there are not only colleges in the main towns, but also adult education centres or community centres in most smaller towns, so that, except in very remote areas, some kind of adult education is available locally. The courses which are run by university extra-mural departments, the Workers' Educational Association (and with some reservations the Universities of the Third Age) are open to all adults and do not lead to qualifications, although recently some extra-mural departments have offered a few diploma courses in specialised fields (such as archaeology and counselling). Since student demand has always been considered important in this liberal adult education sector, courses are organised, if possible, wherever a sufficient number of students requests them.

In England therefore (and with some local and national differences in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) all adults, including older people, have access to a variety of forms of adult education.

Although the range of courses, activities and levels of study is quite wide in most areas, students who have an interest in a particular field may find what they want only in an Open University course or a correspondence course of another kind or level. Distance learning courses offer a solution too to older students who have problems with mobility and travel. Access is limited only if the fees are beyond the student's means.

There is no formal policy for providing educational opportunities for older students. In some Local Education Authority areas special attention is paid to their participation in classes, but there are few programmes specially designed for older people, as yet, in the public sector. Many districts do make fee concessions, generally about 50% for 'pensioners' (together with unemployed and disabled people). We have found no set policy of allowing for learning difficulties (which we believe are not substantial amongst those who choose to study) or for the location and timing difficulties which affect the willingness or ability of older students to attend classes. In some areas these practical difficulties have been recognised, and there is an increasing tendency to organise classes in locations and at times convenient for older people but, in general, older students in the United Kingdom are regarded simply as people wishing to participate in educational activities.

2.3. FINANCE

The methods of funding adult education are complex. The principal source, di-

rectly or indirectly, is central government funding. Government funding of the universities has until recently been administered by a University Grants Committee. This provides the major proportion of the funding, although older universities in particular have other sources of income. However, universities retain a high degree of autonomy. Secondly, and more generally, central government funds are directed through the local authorities (municipalities and County Councils) who control the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). The LEAs are responsible for the provision and running of schools and Colleges of Higher and Further Education (in 1986) and for the form of education provided. An additional form of funding is local taxation. Thirdly, government grants are also made to 'responsible bodies' who are largely free to provide the courses and tuition they decide upon; these bodies include the university extra-mural departments and the WEA. Central government funding seldom meets the whole cost of provision. In addition to public funding most institutions charge more or less economic fees and raise funds in other ways. There are also purely voluntary organisations, clubs and so on, which provide all their own funding by fees, occasionally aided by local authority or other grants, and there are commercial enterprises of various kinds.

2.4. SUMMARY OF PROVISION OF EDUCATION FOR ADULTS[1]

2.4.1. Universities, Polytechnics and other advanced institutions: full-time courses.

In 1985 there were some 80 universities and other institutions providing advanced courses in the United Kingdom, with 600,000 full-time students, 101,500 of them over 25. Most of these have very small numbers of older (over age 60) people as full-time undergraduate or graduate students. Several have specialist departments for research in the field of older learners.

2.4.2. Universities, Polytechnics and other advanced institutions: part-time advanced courses.

In 1985/6 there were 336,800 students following part-time courses in university-level institutions. Of these 219,000 were over 25, with small numbers over 60. 23% of all these part-time students were studying in the Open University.

2.4.3. Universities, Polytechnics and other advanced institutions: extra-mural departments, adult education and continuing education departments (various titles).

Most university level institutions have programmes of part-time non-advanced education for adults. Among these departments are the 'responsible bodies' which receive grants from the central government. Together with the WEA and some smaller bodies, they had 451,000 students in 1985. Some data for the proportion of those over 60 are given in Section 2.

2.4.4. Colleges of Higher and Further Education: non-advanced courses.

There were many of these institutions in the United Kingdom in 1985/6. They provide some degree level courses as well as extensive programmes for advanced, intermediate and preliminary professional qualifications. They had 1,725,000 students in 1985/6; 870,000 of them were over 21. Small numbers of these students were over 60.

2.4.5. Community Colleges and Adult Education Centres (LEA centres).

Local authorities in the United Kingdom provide part-time day and evening adult education classes through a variety of institutions (some of them departments of the colleges in 2.4.4). There were 1,479,000 enrolments in such classes in 1985/6. No national data existed in 1985/6 for the proportion of these students who were over 60. Data obtained by the Older Students Research group are discussed in Chapter 2.

2.4.6. The Workers' Educational Association.

The origins of the WEA are described in paragraph 2 above. It is a 'responsible body' for the provision of adult education in the United Kingdom. Data on stu-

dents numbers are included with university adult education in paragraph 2.4.3. Further data are given in Chapter 2.

2.4.7. Universities of the Third Age.

These have been discussed in paragraph 2.1. There were 100 U3As affiliated to the Third Age Trust in the United Kingdom in 1988, with a membership of some 13,000.

2.4.8. Distance teaching institutions.

The Open University. There were 77,500 adult students throughout the United Kingdom following Open University degree level courses in 1985/6. 3,206 of these undergraduate students were aged 60 or over, as were some 350 Associate Students.

Among a number of smaller distance teaching institutions providing courses for adults in 1985/6 were the National Extension College at Cambridge, Wolsey Hall at Oxford, and London University (External Students) for which further information is given in Chapter 2.

2.4.9. Commercial, industrial and professional institutions conduct an extensive programme of training and updating for their adult staff, using their own training departments or placements in the public sector or free-lance commercial trainers. This programme did not fall within the scope of our research.

2.4.10. In the informal sector there is a huge network of societies and clubs for people interested in, for instance, local history, archaeology, natural history, aspects of science, the environment and so on, and the officers and many of their members may be retired from work. A minority of these (though with a substantial membership) describe themselves as 'pensioners', 'over-60s' or 'retired persons' and include some lectures and field trips within their social and leisure activities. Study tours and special interest weekends, of a quasi-educational nature and provided by the commercial sector, are well patronised by older people.

3. The opening of the Universities to Older People in the Federal Republic of Germany

3.1. In this empirical European study of older students, students from different kinds of institution have been surveyed. It is interesting therefore to see how the entry of older people into university continuing education and into university study, which itself is historically and culturally conditioned, has been arranged.

When we speak of *Seniorenstudenten* in the Federal Republic, we mean older people in retirement who are continuing their education in institutions of higher education, so in a university context, and are doing various kinds of study there. *Seniorenstudium* or 'Studying by Older People' dates from ten years ago in the Federal Republic. Many will find this surprising, since Pierre Vellas had already given the signal for the opening of the university to the elderly, by founding the *Universités du Troisième Age* in 1973.

Professor Vellas founded the University of the Third Age in a country which did not have a system of *Volkshochschulen* like the German one, and so did not have to face problems of areas of responsibility and competition, and was not hampered in innovative theory and practice. It may be said that the difference in the educational system was an important reason, but not the only reason, for the later development in the Federal Republic. Very many older workers are already excluded and cut off from the necessary initial education and continuing education, and their participation in vocational training is below the average. For a long time the time lag may have been due to the negative image of old age, shaped by the concepts 'old people have specific problems', and are a 'social problem' and 'have limited learning capacity'.

In the history of adult education the precursor of *Seniorenstudium* in the Federal Republic was the 'Education of the Elderly' in adult education organisations, such as the *Volkshochschulen*. They were concerned with older adults as a target group considerably earlier than the universities, so we shall go into a little more

detail about this, especially since the UK Older Students Research Group has included in the survey older participants in courses in similar organisations.

3.2. VOLKSHOCHSCHULEN AND THE EDUCATION OF OLDER PEOPLE

Adult education institutions in Germany have a tradition which goes back over a hundred years, and a firm place in the field of continuing education. On the other hand it was only some time after the Second World War that the universities introduced any kind of continuing education. This came about through the setting up of continuing education centres (extra-mural departments) on the English model. In any case there was close co-operation with the classical providers of adult education (e.g. the *Volkshochschulen*).

The *Volkshochschulen*, public (non-party, non-sectarian) continuing education organisations, usually with local government sponsorship, are in principle open to all. The educational interests of older people are therefore taken into consideration in the planning of all areas of work.[2] In any case it was already in the 1950s that *Volkshochschulen* in large towns (e.g. Frankfurt) introduced special programmes for older people which can still be considered as a social welfare version of education for the elderly.[3] At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, departments were established in the *Volkshochschulen* with the aim of catering for older people as a 'target group' and developing courses. Before and after this there were arguments in the *Volkshochschulen*, about whether there should be any kind of special provision at all for older people and whether this should not just be limited to a few areas of continuing education. These would include health education, gymnastics, dancing, nutrition and, in some cases, language courses too.

The following table shows the participation of people aged 50 and over, on the one hand in academic continuing education courses (Extra-Mural Adult Education) in the University of Oldenburg, and on the other hand in courses in the *Volkshochschulen* in Niedersachsen.

TABLE 2

Participants aged 50 or over in 'Extra-Mural Courses' in the University of Oldenburg* and in *Volkshochschulen* in Niedersachsen

Year	Extra-Mural Univ. Oldenburg		VHS in Niedersachsen	
	Numbers	%	*Numbers*	%
1975	52	3	35,822	9
1976	162	7	42,744	10
1977	203	10	45,653	11
1978	325	9	46,073	10
1979	258	8	56,548	12
1980	293	9	61,908	11
1981	†	†	76,341	13
1982	367	11	96,289	10
1983	289	9	83,117	14
1984	298	10	87,548	15
1985	187	9	87,139	15

* These courses were arranged in co-operation with adult education institutions; they are not part of the University programme.

† No data available.

The *Volkshochschulen* in Niedersachsen have a higher proportion of older participants (aged 50 and over) than the Extra-Mural Department of the University of Oldenburg (15% as opposed to 9%). The figures for the University of Oldenburg are similar to those of the other Extra-Mural Departments in universities in Niedersachsen. While the continuing education activity of older people in Extra-Mural Adult Education has remained constant over the years, the numbers taking part in the *Volkshochschulen* have more than doubled between 1975 and 1985. It must be pointed out here that Extra-Mural Adult Education does not offer certain courses which play a large part in the programmes of the *Volkshoch-*

schulen, such as courses in physical education, language courses, handicrafts and other leisure courses.

According to the statistics of the Extra-Mural Adult Education department of the University of Oldenburg the percentage of students who are aged 65 or over is only 3–4%. This low rate of participation in education corresponds to the participation in courses in *Volkshochschulen* in the Federal Republic shown below.

TABLE 3

Participants in courses in *Volkshochschulen* in the Federal Republic by age (percentages)

	1984	*1985*
Under 18	12.6	10.7
18–24	20.7	21.7
25–34	28.7	27.5
35–49	24.9	25.8
50–64	9.2	10.0
65+	3.9	4.3

The most recent figures for Baden-Württemberg show that the participation in education of the 50–64 age group is 11% and that of those over 65 is 3.4%.[4]

In 1979 Tietgens stated that older adults are under-represented in adult education organisations. According to him, at that time the reasons for it lay in the medium level of standards in the *Volkshochschulen*. 'At the middle level less is demanded and expected, the older the age group is'.[5]

In the middle of the 1970s an increasing self-awareness developed in older people; others even said 'a new group of consumers is being formed'. Increasingly groups of older people were being formed, which represented the interest of 'Seniors'. Independently of the *Volkshochschulen* older people themselves established continuing education academies, for example the 'Dortmund Academy', the 'Club of the Older Generation' at the Mannheim evening academy, the 'Cologne Academy of the Older Generation'.[6]

These activities were already aiming at giving a new direction to learning in old age, in the way in which this had been signalled at Toulouse, in other words not to be limited to the traditional adult education organisations but to branch out into the universities.

In the 1980s an increasing number of 'Folk High Schools for Seniors' were created (Heidelberg, and before that Villingen) with the object of encouraging by special courses those older people who hesitate to join a course where the majority of participants are young.

3.3. UNIVERSITIES AND 'OLDER' STUDENTS

In this context from the end of the 1970s in the Federal Republic, gerontologists in the universities began to work to open the universities to older age groups. This took place particularly where there were centres of continuing education (as at Dortmund or Oldenburg) or where gerontology was established in the university (as at Kassel). The following data show this development:

1978 In the University of Kassel the interdisciplinary working group on Social Gerontology dealt with the 'University of the Third Age', 'as a link between academic study, practice and public in relation to ageing'.[7]

1979 Co-operation began between members of the universities of Dortmund, Kassel and Oldenburg in the context of the sixth International Congress of the 'University of the Third Age' in Nancy in 1979.

1979 The first international workshop on the opening of the universities to older adults took place in Oldenburg.[8]

1980 In the University of Dortmund a pilot project began on the 'Development

and testing of a programme of training for older students as animateurs and organisers'.[9]

1985 In the University of Marburg a pilot project began on 'development of non-vocational studies for older students'.

In the following years there was increasing interest in the opening of the universities to older people, in political circles, but above all in the media.

Between 1981 and 1987 there were three further international workshops on the opening of the universities to older adults:

1981 in the University of Dortmund[10]
1984 in the University of Dortmund[11]
1987 in the University of Marburg[12]

The number of participants in these conferences altogether grew from 60 to almost 400, as did international participation in them.

'The Federal working party on the opening of the universities to older adults' (BAG) began in 1984. In the meantime various forms of study for older adults were tried out in many universities. In this connection we must certainly mention the 'Berlin mode: Training for post retirement occupations' (BANA) at the Technical University,[13] and the project 'Voluntary work in gerontological research' at the Free University of Berlin.[14]

It can be clearly seen in the figures from the University of Oldenburg that even where the catchment area consists of small towns and rural areas, older people are increasingly making use of the possibility of continuing an academic education in a university. So the number of older associate students showed a four-fold increase from the summer semester in 1983 to the winter semester in 1987/88. At 54% of the total the older associate students were in a majority over the younger ones.[15] Nevertheless the number of older students in the universities is well below the number of older participants in continuing education courses in the *Volkshochschulen*.

3.4. FORMS OF STUDY AND ORGANISATIONAL MODELS

Anyone who studies at a German university is enrolled either as a 'qualified student' or as an 'associate student' (*Gasthörer*). The 'qualified student' must have the formal qualifications (*Abitur* or a special entrance examination to study without *Abitur*) for university entry. Residents who do not have formal university entry qualifications, can also enrol as 'associate students' but they cannot get any qualifications from the course. The fees for associate students are very different and vary from university to university, but in general they are at about the level of a course fee in a *Volkshochschule*. Since the associate student fee can cover several courses, continuing education in the university is currently attractive from a financial point of view even for older people. Two thirds of all students over 60 had the status of 'associate student' according to the results of our inquiry.[16]

As happened when 'Universities of the Third Age' were established in France, in the Federal Republic too a variety of institutions have been set up for the induction and integration of senior students into the universities: centres for academic continuing education, departments of adult education and social science or the central university administration. This also affected the ways in which the opening of the universities to older adults came about.

1. Continuing education courses for retirement activities (Universities of Dortmund, Berlin).
2. Non-vocational short courses (University of Marburg).
3. Organisation of a range of courses especially for older students (University of the Third Age in the University of Frankfurt am Main).
4. An extended programme for associate students which would facilitate entry to individual study, give a free choice of courses and allow individuals to plan their own timetable, but which also offers older students their own organisational framework and counselling (such as the 'Structured programme for older adults' at the University of Oldenburg; similarly also in Bielefeld, Münster, Trier and others).

3.5. UNIVERSITY AIMS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

So far in the universities the following objectives can be seen:

Study by older adults is understood as academic continuing education in a university—whatever form it takes—as a continuing education course or as individual and often interdisciplinary study in the programmes available to associate students—the requirements for dealing with academic study must be satisfied.

Lack of information and contact between the younger and older generation needs to be changed by the organisation of possibilities of studying together, so that intergenerational understanding develops. 'Intergenerational study' seems to be gaining ground as a main feature of studying in old age.

It should be made possible for older people to re-organise their identity in the new social context of the university, and the initial difficulties inherent in the educational situation should be minimised. In supplementary programmes, academic work, empirical social research and other basic knowledge can be provided separately for older students. Individual counselling plays a large part, as do the older students' own information circles and their own meeting points.

Older students' competence should benefit society. Qualifications for retirement activities outside paid employment should be facilitated, for example for honorary activities in many different kinds of social fields, e.g. work with old people, ecology, local history research.

Study of old age should be stimulated by the interest of older students themselves, by the insights which they bring to teaching, and by the visible presence of old people in the universities.

Efforts are being made to bring older students into areas of research.

3.6. FINANCE

Older students pay their own fees. Since these fees are comparable with the usual fees in continuing education, this does not seem to be a problem. In the universities themselves, their own spokesmen, counsellors and planners must help to facilitate study by older people. This needs resources from the university or other sources. So far, the universities have contributed indirectly in making available associate student programme teachers, rooms, and by co-operating with centres of continuing education. In some universities, special staff could be employed for a limited time by arrangement with departments of employment, so-called job creating measures. The two pilot projects in the universities of Dortmund and Marburg had the best financial support through a Federal and provincial grant.

3.7. THE FEDERAL WORKING PARTY ON THE OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITIES TO OLDER STUDENTS (BAG).

The BAG is an amalgamation of universities which are taking part in the opening up of the universities, and wish to have a national agreement on it. The BAG is an educational policy forum, whose task is to organise the exchange of information and to further the concept of the opening up of the universities. Meantime, it also has the task of planning the international workshops which have been held since 1979. There are a number of different working groups within the BAG of which one, since 1988, has been the group on 'European collaboration'.

3.8. INITIATIVES ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In our view there is considerable interest among older students to meet and exchange with students in other countries. For example in 1988 and 1989 there were exchange visits between older students of the Universities of Oldenburg and Groningen, which were mainly concerned with the experiences and different opportunities of study. The development of a variety of educational models for older students and academic support for this in different European universities might give the necessary public support to the significance of study in later life,

in the Vellas sense of the creation of a more humane society. Exchange of teachers must also be encouraged, in order to develop new methods of learning together for older and younger students, as well as to develop the participation of older students in research.

4. Adult Education in France

4.1 In comparison with other European countries such as Germany and Great Britain it can be said that in France before the second World War there was no real tradition of continuing education, either for adults or, *a fortiori*, for older people. This is due to the fact that France was still a predominantly rural country with one large conurbation, Paris. There was an element of continuing education at parish and village level: organisation of theatrical performances, attendance at cinemas, and a variety of other activities. It was the France of the village priest and the village schoolmaster. These two personages formed the basis of some form of established culture, though one cannot speak in terms of a really organised structure.

A radical change took place after the war. It was due to two factors: industrialisation and urbanisation, which brought about the depopulation of the countryside; technological development which involved the need for re-training of employees in all sectors. From the 1970s, in addition to these two factors, there was the increase in the percentage of retired people.

A powerful movement towards the development of continuing education took place from 1960. The result of this was the very important law of 1971, which obliged all employers, including the State for the public sector, to allocate a part of their total budget to continuing education. At that point there were created in universities 'departments of continuing education', which have proved to be a great success.

Many other private institutions of continuing education have been created.

In 1972 this movement was extended to older people owing to the initiative of Professor Pierre Vellas, who created in the University of the Social Sciences in Toulouse the first University of the Third Age (UTA). This was clearly a revolutionary initiative, since it was fulfilling a social need and was immediately an immense success.

It was only in the course of the years following the creation and rapid development of the UTAs that traditional French universities realised that this new concept of 'learning for older students' was part of the general trend in favour of continuing education. Hence a good number of university Continuing Education Departments created a special section for older students. It should be emphasised that the UTAs created by the French universities' Continuing Education Departments are no doubt those which best developed and implemented the original concept. Some sort of alteration of the concept was bound to occur in the long run through the development of older people's clubs calling themselves 'UTAs'.

This danger has been avoided to a very large extent thanks to:

1. The fact that most of the UTAs created at the beginning were in traditional university departments.
2. The creation at national level, as early as 1979, of a French Association of UTAs (UFUTA). This association, through symposiums and various meetings, contributed to help member institutions not to go astray from the original concept.

4.2. COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

There are no formal conditions of admission, but a kind of self-selection has developed: participants normally have a sufficient cultural background to be interested in the courses and activities of various kinds.

The programmes are very varied: history, literature, fine arts, languages, music, physical activities, etc. In certain cases long-term study programmes have been developed.

Students are not working for any formal qualifications.

In a fairly good number of UTAs, intensive study in a particular area is organised, e.g. Gothic architecture, the Santiago pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, Impressionist painting, etc.

4.3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A certain tendency has developed towards universities which accept people of all ages. This has led to the use of a variety of names: *Universités Inter-Ages, du Temps Libre, du Tiers Temps, de la Culture Permanente*, etc.

This recent development seems to be due, to a very large extent, to the fact that France did not have, up to recently, a structure that could cater for the needs of those who could afford following non-credit courses before the age of retirement. The UTAs provided such a structure, and came to be considered as an institution open to all age groups, and so facilitated intergenerational relations and avoided age segregation. The employment crisis helped develop inter-age UTAs by providing a structure of continuing education to all those who had been incited by the government to leave their jobs before retirement age.

Some do not agree with this new development in so far as it may lead to the loss of the specificity of the UTA concept. The concept implies the specificity of the age group concerned together with the specificity of its needs and of the research that these specific needs imply.

In practice, up to now, statistically, 70% or even 80% of all students enrolled are of the third age.

4.4. ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE IN FRANCE

1. An institution with the characteristics of a university, established as far as possible in a traditional university, and making use of its intellectual and administrative features to develop continuing education for older people.
2. An institution devoted to research in the field of gerontology and developing this research on the basis of experience.

4.5. UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE IN FRANCE ARE OF SEVERAL KINDS

1. An autonomous university department (Reims), or a branch of a department (Toulouse, Bordeaux).
2. A department in the continuing education section (Nantes).
3. An independent association having formal links with a university (Nancy, Dijon), or informal links with universities (Fontenay-aux-Roses, Béziers)

4.6. FINANCE

There is a variety of sources of funding: self-financing by student fees; state subsidy through allocation of teaching resources; subsidy by local authorities.

4.7. SOME FIGURES

There are about forty UTAs affiliated to the French Association. They represent, as regards enrolment, about 80,000 older students. Some UTAs have an enrolment above 3,000: Bordeaux, Reims, Nancy, Nantes. The most important ones have established branches in the main towns of the region. These branches depend academically and financially on the parent institution.

4.8. INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

As early as 1976, owing to the international extension of the UTAs, there was created in Toulouse, by Professor Pierre Vellas, the International Association of the Universities of the Third Age (AIUTA), which most of the French UTAs joined. At present about 90 UTAs in 20 different countries are members of the Association (Europe, Australia, North, Central and South America).

4.9. TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES

In addition to teaching and courses specially organised in some UTAs there is also the possibility of following traditional university courses as an associate

student, often depending on the number of places available. In large UTAs access to these may involve some hundreds of students. On the other hand, the number of people aged 60 or over, whether they belong to a UTA or not, who follow traditional university courses, is very low.

5. Aspects of the history of adult education in Belgium[17]

Life-long education, education for adults, continuing education, second chance education, are some of the branches of teaching which have seen considerable development in recent years, rather outside traditional teaching circles, although sometimes connected with them. Yet this is far from being a new phenomenon; it had already appeared in the nineteenth century in a wide variety of forms and aimed at many different kinds of people. The present situation will be discussed later.

First we shall limit ourselves to considering some aspects of the question by concentrating mainly on what happened in Brussels in the nineteenth century.

We must begin by remembering that in the educational world in the nineteenth century persons aged 14 and over were considered to be adults. If we take this fact into account then we can distinguish two sectors of 'adult education':

1. An elementary sector, developing from traditional primary education;
2. A sector outside traditional educational structures, which as a result escaped any form of legislation; there are two levels to be seen here:
   a) a higher level restricted to a certain élite;
   b) popular education intentionally aimed at the less privileged classes of the population.

But we shall see that this neat classification breaks down and that some of what took place in practice was in between the two categories.

5.1. THE ELEMENTARY SECTOR: 'SCHOOLS FOR ADULTS'

This means elementary primary education (reading, writing, arithmetic) aimed at 'adults', over the age of 14, who had not had the opportunity of attending daytime courses when they were at primary school age. Teaching was done in the evening or on Sundays. At a time when primary education was not compulsory in Belgium (it did not become so until 1914) adults' schools made a certain contribution to the struggle against illiteracy. Setting them up was optional, at least until 1879, and depended on the good will of the 'organising authority' in a parish or commune.

The first law relating to primary education of 23 September 1842 mentioned it only in article 25 which held that:

> Part of the subsidy voted annually by the legislature (= Parliament) for primary education shall be particularly devoted to 1 (. . .); 2, promoting evening and Sunday schools for adults; 3 (. . .). The government will ensure the co-operation of the provinces and communes in getting the results which are the object of these subsidies.

On the other hand the second law of the 1st July 1879 gave the government the power to require certain communes to open an adult school. The first article of the law stated in effect that 'In every commune of the Kingdom at least one primary school shall be established in a suitable location.' '*Salles d'asile* or *Écoles gardiennes* and courses for adults will be attached to the community school in every locality where the government considers it necessary.'

The third law, of 20 September 1884, again made optional the organisation of courses for adults, leaving the initiative to the communes, or to the private sector, which was in fact heavily subsidized.

Yet it can be assumed that the numbers of schools and pupils were continually growing as a result of the slow but steady progress in the struggle against illiteracy and this continued until the passing of the law of 1914 on compulsory education, which put an end to the history of these adult schools.

5.2. THE NON-TRADITIONAL SECTOR (PARA OR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION; LIFE-LONG OR CONTINUING EDUCATION)

From the 19th century many public-spirited thinkers had been aware that education was not limited to the traditional school context, that a wide range of teaching could be given both to people who had been at school for a comparatively long time, and to non-attenders (who could nevertheless read and write). This was done at two levels, and first and foremost at a fairly advanced level.

5.2.1. Higher level

The aim here was to offer an educated public, some of whom already had certificates of secondary and higher education, some who were self-educated or simply spurred on by healthy intellectual curiosity, courses of high quality, incorporating the latest developments in knowledge, outside any official programme, and not aiming at any kind of qualification. Some particular achievements should be noted.

1. Public courses at the Athénée, the Museum, then the town of Brussels.

The royal decree of 25 September 1816, organising higher education in the southern provinces of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which applied also to humanities colleges 'considered as forming the first stage of higher education', had wished to see courses on science open to the public organised in certain of these colleges, which would then be called Athenaeums. The aim of these would be 'generally to spread forth good taste and enlightenment in all classes of society, not excepting those who were not aiming at academic courses', in other words the University.

In Brussels it was not until 1824 that the illustrious Adolphe Quetelet organised the first public courses in physics and astronomy at the Athenaeum. In 1826–1827 King William I, no doubt wishing to offer Brussels some compensation for the loss of its university faculties (which had gone back to Louvain in 1817), decided to extend these public courses, and established them in the buildings of the Museum of Science and Arts, that is on the former palace of Charles of Lorraine (Place du Musée). These public courses at the Museum attracted a large number of participants, who were attracted by the great names of the Brussels intelligentsia: Auguste Baron, Philippe Lesbroussart, or Quetelet who has already been mentioned.

The professors at the Museum, who were often also members of the teaching staff of the Athenaeum, were involved in the establishment of the Free University of Brussels. When this opened in October–November 1834 it included in its programme the public courses, available free to anyone, but their success was decreasing and the University abolished them after a few years. That is why, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the town of Brussels took the initiative in organising new ones, housed in its middle schools (opened in 1851, later becoming community athenaeums), then also in the next century in its Institute of Arts and Crafts. As an historical aside it is interesting to note that it was under the cover of these public courses that the University of Brussels was able to continue to offer a range of teaching programmes, after it had been closed under the German occupation in November 1941.

2. 'Higher level courses for ladies'

The question of the admission of women to university study was raised in Belgium in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, later than in the United States and several European countries. While waiting for a solution to this problem in both the academic sphere and on legal grounds (in practice the law made no mention of the gender of the students and it was only tradition which prevented the enrolment of women in the universities), the town of Brussels set up in 1878 'Higher level courses for ladies'. Like the public courses not leading to any qualification, they offered a very wide range of educational programmes, from the history of music to astronomy, as well as more traditional subjects. The teaching staff was drawn mainly from teachers in the Free University of Brussels.

From 1880 women began to be admitted to our universities, first Brussels, then at Liège and Ghent. This development made higher level courses for ladies less necessary.

3. University extension departments.

A new attempt to popularise university culture, aimed at a wider public, was made in the last decade of the 19th century on the initiative of progressive laymen who were inspired by an English model. From 1873 the University of Oxford decided to leave its ivory tower and make available some of its learning to adults who were eager to stock their minds, but had no academic aspiration. This example was followed by other institutions. It was in this way that in England 'University Extension Departments' were created, which also represented an attempt to decentralise culture.

In Belgium a first university extension department was founded in 1892 in Ghent, attached to the University. It offered teaching, courses and lectures in Flemish.

In Brussels, teachers and former students of ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles) set up a university extension department in 1893.

The Catholics soon joined in the movement by setting up, first in Anvers in 1898, a Catholic university extension department, which was closely linked to the Flemish movement. Later it was followed by a French-speaking extension.

All these institutions were in some way taking up the work done by the public courses, but extending the geographical area covered by them, and they all wished to spread knowledge in all classes of the population by popularisation at a high academic level. It was over-ambitious in the context of the epoch. In practice they reached only the bourgeoisie, especially the better-off, and a few isolated representatives of the working class. Also overall they offered their public lectures or series of lectures rather than real courses of study. This is still the case today in the Extension of ULB and its numerous local branches.

4. The Institute of Higher Education in Belgium.

A 'New University', which had started at the end of the 19th century as a result of a conflict within ULB, decided to organise alongside its faculty teaching programmes a group of non-traditional courses, which did not appear in the programmes of other universities, and which were not intended to lead to an academic qualification. This was the origin of its 'Institute of Higher Education', which survived the closing of the new university after the First World War. It is still entirely independent today, although it is housed in ULB buildings, and at the present time still offers a small number of courses. Its main activity now, however, consists of the organisation of lectures and conferences.

5.3. POPULAR EDUCATION

Besides all these efforts at popularisation aimed at a public which was already relatively well educated, there was also the wish to offer sound learning to larger sections of the population. From the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution (Condorcet, Danton *et al.*) came the idea of the emancipation of Man through education. With the birth of socialist doctrines, the 19th century was aiming at the emancipation of the working class. From these new currents, which were to contribute to changes in the schools themselves by giving them a social role, there were to emerge also:

—popular education circles (*cercles d'éducation populaire*);
—People's Universities;
—private sponsorship (*patronages laïques*);
—post-school associations.

These movements would have a part to play in education outside the school, the first two being aimed at adults (in our present sense of the word) and the two others restricted to adolescents.

Popular education circles appeared in Belgium in the 1860s, for example at Saint-Josse in 1863, at Ghent in 1868, at Laeken in 1878. . . Lectures were organised, but also stage performances, sometimes with music and refreshments. Most of them had a library. Some of the circles were 'grass-roots' creations, others owed their existence to 'enlightened' middle class people and, as a result, had a more paternalistic ethos.

People's Universities (*Universités populaires*) were much more ambitious. The inspiration came from France, and they developed out of the groups which were created in the context of the Dreyfus affair, as a point of contact between intellectuals and workers.

The first People's University began in Schaerbeeck at the end of 1900. In 1901 one of the most famous of all, the 'Foyer intellectuel de Saint-Gilles' opened at Saint-Gilles. Ten years later there were about sixty of them, concentrated mainly in Brabant and Hainaut. Unlike the University Extension Departments, and despite their name, these People's Universities had no link with traditional universities, even though the latter sometimes lent their teachers to the former. They were purely local groups, aimed at a different public, lower middle and working class, for whom they claimed to provide a general intellectual education, but one which was moral and social too. After a spectacular success in the early days, the movement declined rapidly.

The relative failure of the *cercles* and *Universités populaires* raised questions. It

was clear that the public had to be prepared, and that better recruitment could be assured by aiming at the youngest, at adolescents who were finishing or had just left primary school. It is this which led to the creation of privately run organisations (*patronages laïques*) and post-school clubs. The common factor in the two kinds of group was their wish to act 'so that a pupil leaving school does not lose the fruits of education which he has received, but on the contrary develops it more and more'. Their activities extended in many directions:

—an educative role of course, by organising lectures;
—providing amusements by organising sporting and leisure activities;
—a social role, especially in the early days: they served as employment agencies, friendly societies, pension and insurance funds.

The difference between them was that the post-school clubs were linked to one or several schools, and the private organisations were not. The movement which has just been described had its greatest period of development before 1914.

This rapid survey cannot be completed without mentioning the part played in continuing education by the 'Ligue de l'Enseignement' founded in December 1864. From the beginning, in addition to its fight for compulsory schooling, it worked for popular education and continuing education, organising lectures in its local sections, setting up or subsidising public libraries. Between 1900 and 1914 it led a decisive campaign on behalf of post-school activities, even creating a commission charged with studying the problem.

5.3.1. Some aspects of subsequent developments

After the first world war, when the 1914 law introducing compulsory education was put into practice, the traditional schools for adults were no longer needed and they disappeared.

Popular education circles and people's universities experienced a slow decline. They did not all give up their activities, but those which survived tended to develop into leisure clubs for retired people. On the other hand, 'second chance' education developed, particularly in the form of evening classes, sometimes at a higher level (training courses for chartered accountants, language courses, degrees in economics etc.). Universities have for some time been interested in the problem and developed courses with flexible timetables. Besides this, at a lower level, the State, in association with its employment offices, set up courses of professional training intended for the unemployed. In all cases second chance education aimed at giving better qualifications, (often with a diploma) to those who had not had the opportunity of getting a qualification in the normal course of their studies.

Last but not least recent decades have seen the advent of what have sometimes been called 'Universities of the Third Age', with purely cultural aims, like CEPULB; they have quickly achieved real success.

5.4. BELGIAN FRANCOPHONE UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE[18]

5.4.1. Structure and Finance

Some Belgian Universities of the Third Age have a precise constitution (A.S.B.L. for example i.e. a non profit making organisation), others do not. They describe themselves as cultural and scientific associations.

None of them as yet receives directly and in its own name (except the Universities of the Third Age of Liège and Barvaux—recognised and subsidised as a 'Continuing Education Organisation for Adults') a specific form of recognition and subsidy granted by a ministry.

They are obliged to get their funding for their administrative and financial needs from their members' annual subscriptions and from the administrative body or institution on whose initiative they were founded such as: the provincial authority (the Universities of the Third Age and Free Time in the Province of Hainaut); the town (Liège); the university (Brussels, Louvain la Neuve). All the Universities of the Third Age and Free Time are under the patronage of a university institution which guarantees the level and academic character of the programmes offered.

5.4.2. Activities and Membership

There are 12 Universities of the Third Age and Free Time in the francophone part of the country; they are in: Brussels, Charleroi (the first in Belgium—April 1975), Liège, Louvain, Mons, Namur, Tournai, Virton, La Louvière, Barvaux, Mouscron, Braine-le-Comte. Branches have also been set up in Dinant, Nivelles, Ottignies, Woluwe.

These Universities of the Third Age and Free Time organise a wide range of activities, of which the most common are: lecture series, language courses, cultural journeys, seminars, physical education. The frequency of the cultural activities offered varies from one to five a week according to the University of the Third Age.

The number of students enrolled also varies considerably from one University of the Third Age to another. So the number of members may vary between 120 and 3000 from one University of the Third Age to another. Altogether the Universities of the Third Age in the francophone part of the country have more than 10,000 students. For one of the universities recruitment is handled partly by the reception section in a C.P.A.S. (Public Centre for Social Assistance) for all the others enrolment is on a purely individual basis. The number of members taking part in the various activities varies very much from one university to another. In some universities it is the courses of lectures which have the highest attendance (up to nearly 100%), in others it is language courses or arts and crafts which get the highest enrolment. A wide variety of people join the Universities of the Third Age: if, generally speaking, there are few who can be counted as 'manual workers', it is noticeable that the so-called 'higher' socio-professional groups are not the best represented.

The main body of members of Universities of the Third Age come from the section of the population which includes employees, teachers, middle management and self-employed.

As they wish to extend their activities to all sections of the population and increase their impact on people who come from a more modest background, most Universities of the Third Age have launched a programme of decentralisation and democratisation of their activities. So, thanks to the efforts which have been made to ensure a high standard of public relations, choice of teachers and teaching methods, they aim to offer cultural activities which are of high quality, original and which promise to be of interest to a very large number of people.

5.5. ASSOCIATION OF BELGIAN FRANCOPHONE UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE (AFUTAB)

Belgium was one of the first countries where Universities of the Third Age were founded. The 15th anniversary of the first University of the Third Age in Belgium (Charleroi) was in 1989. Attracted by Professor Vellas' idea, university teachers and important people in social and cultural circles undertook step by step to found a University of the Third Age in their respective towns and provinces. An existing university institution which in any case would 'sponsor' each University of the Third Age, would in certain cases provide the infrastructure and the funding needed, though this was limited, to make them operational.

Anticipating the important role which the Universities of the Third Age would be called upon to play in the society of the future, from both an academic and a human point of view, the founders of the Universities of the Third Age in the francophone part of the country co-operated in their efforts to provide Wallonia and Brussels with 12 Universities of the Third Age evenly distributed in the main urban centres.

As they wished to co-ordinate their activities they then set up (June 1979) the Association des Universités Francophones du Troisième Age de Belgique (AFUTAB) which then established the following objectives:

—the development of the Belgian Francophone Universities of the Francophone Third Age and the co-ordination of their activities

—the representation of its members in the International Association (AIUTA), public authorities and large-scale third age movements.

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2

The International Survey: Methodology and Student Characteristics

1. Methodology

The survey of students aged 60 or over in selected institutions in Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom was made by self-completion questionnaire. We wanted to ensure that there would be as little variation as possible in the methodology, so that the results obtained would be comparable. We therefore agreed to use the questionnaire first used in the United Kingdom survey. This was translated into French and German, taking care to find as exact equivalents as possible where there are national differences, such as in educational systems.

The questionnaire has three sections:

Section 1 has questions on age, gender, marital status, educational and occupational background, attitudes to schooling, experience of further education, motives for studying and current subject of study.

Section 2 has factual questions about study methods, time spent, organisation of work and use of study aids.

Section 3 used the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI) on attitudes to study; this is an instrument already well tested on conventional university students of different ages, and on mature students in Australia.

Educational qualifications were put into ten categories. There was consultation when the questionnaire was translated to ensure that equivalent qualifications for each country appear in each of the ten categories.

Occupation categories used are those which have been tested in use for some eighteen years in the Open University, and were originally based on the occupations given by adult student applicants. These categories have the advantage that they show the kind of work done, rather than just occupational status.

Subjects of study had to be categorised. Students were simply asked what they were currently studying, and over a hundred different subjects were mentioned in responses. We analysed these, and put them into nine broad categories, so that the results from different countries and different institutions are now comparable. A tenth category was added to show those not currently studying.

1.1. ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A total of 4461 usable completed questionnaires was received from the institutions surveyed. All the completed questionnaires were returned to the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology, where they were analysed. First an analysis was made of responses from each separate institution to precoded questions. Responses to open-ended questions were then coded. The questionnaire was issued to students following academic or non-academic courses and at different levels; level of study could only be estimated in the case of courses leading to a qualification. Respondents were invited to add general comments, and a large number did so. The French and German responses were translated into English and we illustrate many of the findings with selected comments.

There were inevitably some differences in the selection of the samples and in the methods of distribution of the questionnaires in the different countries and institutions. These are discussed below in the sections describing each country's contribution.

In the following sections we then show the characteristics of older student respondents in the four countries.

2. United Kingdom Adult Education Institutions

The Open University Older Students Research Group has now surveyed students aged 60 or over in at least one example of each of the main types of adult education provision in the United Kingdom. These categories include: the Open University; other institutions providing correspondence or distance education; those offering what may be described as liberal adult education; and Local Education Authority Institutions. We now have results from two surveys of older Open University students in 1982 and 1985, and a third survey of older students in other adult education institutions in 1986–7. The findings of the third of these surveys are derived from the English version of the questionnaire which was also issued to Belgian, French and German students.

We report first on the findings of this third survey, and later on the findings for the Open University.

2.1. THE SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

A comprehensive study drawn from all types of adult education would have been beyond our resources; but it was possible to cover at least one example from each of the main categories mentioned above. The final selection was influenced by contacts with representatives of these different organisations.

2.1.1. Distance learning organisations (other than the Open University): London University (External Students); National Extension College (NEC); and Wolsey Hall correspondence college

These organisations have much in common in their administration, methods and programmes. Students in the first may use correspondence courses or private study; in the last two their study is mainly by correspondence. The organisations differ in the levels of the courses they offer. London University (External Students) courses are, naturally, at university level. The courses offered by the National Extension College and Wolsey Hall range from those leading to higher professional qualifications to those at a very elementary level. London University leaves students free to determine for themselves their patterns of study, though an initial advisory service is available; the NEC provides its own distance learning courses which include correspondence tuition (and in this resembles the OU); and Wolsey Hall, except in a few cases, does not devise its own courses, but provides lesson notes and distance tuition, based on examination syllabuses and text books. Entry is open to all adults, though there may be prerequisites for the higher level courses. We were not able to get accurate data on the numbers of students at any one time, but we believe that NEC has about 5,000 and Wolsey Hall about 10,000.

2.1.2. Liberal Adult Education Institutions

We use this term to identify this group, without any suggestion that they have a monopoly of liberal elements in their approach. Those examined were London University Extra-Mural Department, and two districts of the Workers' Educational Association (Berks, Bucks and Oxon District, and Southern District). These represent the officially designated 'Responsible Bodies' which traditionally offer adult education courses not leading to formal qualifications. We also included eighteen of the recently developed Universities of the Third Age, as their approach and methods have more in common with those of the Responsible Bodies than with those of other sectors of adult education. They are purely voluntary organisations.

The WEA traditionally responds to student initiative and student demand in what it offers, and the U3As are similar in this respect. The WEA works closely with university extra-mural departments, though some of the latter's courses are more closely linked with university provision.

No qualifications are needed for entry to any of these institutions. A large percentage of the courses offered are in the humanities and the social sciences. They are normally not for qualification, though London University Extra-Mural Department offers some diploma courses. Study is mainly in groups, generally meeting for weekly sessions, or, in some cases, for day-long or week-end sessions with tutors, or for lecture programmes. The U3As are the only ones to have programmes intended primarily for older students.

2.1.3. Local Education Authority Institutions

The United Kingdom is divided into 104 local authorities for the purpose of administration, and in these there are Local Education Authorities, each responsible for the provision of all education within its area. There is an LEA in all counties and in many large cities. They work under the general direction of central government, but have considerable local autonomy. In adult education they provide a very wide range of instruction, from near degree level academic studies to practical or purely leisure activities. They were represented in our survey by adult education institutions in Dorset, Essex, Lancashire and the City of Leicester.

We found that the pattern of provision by the colleges of further education and the community colleges was fairly similar, despite some differences between the areas themselves. The former offer more courses for qualification and the latter more leisure activities, but there is considerable overlap.

We noted in North Essex many daytime courses which had special appeal to older students, and in South-East Essex it was reported that the percentage of elderly students attending any particular centre was in direct proportion to the availability of daytime classes. In the City of Leicester too some courses are arranged specifically for the elderly.

2.2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

It was not simple to reach older students in British adult education organisations. We realised that we should have to rely heavily on the co-operation of those concerned. This led us to take our examples from those institutions with which we already had connections and where we thought we could expect assistance. We are grateful for their co-operation and for the help which was so generously given.

We had first to ask the institutions which had agreed to take part in the survey whether they could identify older students from their records; if they could, we were given access to the records and got names and addresses of students who were 60 or over by going through all the records. The questionnaire was then mailed to these students, with a covering letter of support from the institution.

In the United Kingdom there were serious deficiencies in the records on adult education, and this was a great impediment to our study of it. The local authorities had no consistent method of record keeping, and those kept by many of the institutions proved quite inadequate for our purposes. Some did not record students' addresses and most did not record age as such. It was therefore very difficult to identify students over the age of 60.

However, some institutions did keep notes of students who claimed concessionary fees as state pensioners; but we were told that it is known that many pensioners do not opt to pay the concessionary rate; and since men do not qualify for the state pension until 65, we could not identify men between 60 and 65 this way. We assumed that students of the Universities of the Third Age were by definition older; there were some replies from people not yet 60, and responses from them were not used in the survey.

For London University Extra-Mural and WEA students we first sent batches of short forms to tutors and asked them to distribute these to their students in class, collect them and return them to us. The form asked students to volunteer to receive a questionnaire, give their name and address, and indicate their age in three broad age groups. From the forms returned we selected the 60-plus age group and mailed the questionnaire to them.

Students' addresses were available in some of the LEA institutions in Leicester, and questionnaires were posted to these students. In most LEA institutions

our method was to have discussions with organisers and teaching staff and to arrange with them to visit a large number of classes and ask students to take a questionnaire away, complete it and return it by post later. The visits were made by members of the research group or by the staff of the institutions. The response from this method was poorer than from direct mailing.

2.3. RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Because of the difficulties in identifying older students and the variety of methods of distributing the questionnaires, we did not expect a particularly good response from institutions other than the Open University. Where we were able to compile a mailing list we have exact figures for the response, but where questionnaires were distributed to classes, or supplies given to administrators or tutors who had agreed to help by distributing them, we have only estimates of the numbers given out.

In distance education 32% and in extra-mural and WEA organisations over 50% of the students replied. Six U3As gave us a mailing list, but others, including the large London U3A, were sent questionnaires for distribution. We estimate that at least 40% of students in liberal adult education replied, and there was probably an overall response of 20% in LEA institutions. We believe that the response in total was between 35% and 40% of those who received questionnaires. This appears to be a comparatively good response for this kind of survey. Details are given in Table 4 below.

Clearly the methods of distribution we had to use will have led to some bias in the response: it may be that replies came in the main from well-organised students who are regular attenders.

TABLE 4

Questionnaire distribution and response

	Number of questionnaires issued	*No. of usable questionnaires returned*
1. Distance Education		
London University (External)	256	62
National Extension College	198	74
Wolsey Hall	122	47
Total in group		183
2. Liberal Adult Education		
London University Extra-Mural Department	125	88
Workers Educational Association	253	114
Universities of the Third Age (estimated)	1465	451
Total in group		653
3. LEA Institutions		
Christchurch, Dorset	194	94
North Essex	*	103
South-East Essex	*	54
Lancashire	*	84
Leicester	968	247
Total in group		582
Total in all groups	*	**1418**

* not known

One of the main aims was to look at older students' approach to learning; and

there are broad similarities within each group of institutions in their organisation, in their provision, and in the teaching and learning methods most commonly used. Clearly each institution makes its own distinctive contribution to adult education and each has also some features in common with institutions of a different kind. Nevertheless the grouped results show patterns in the background of the respondents, what they study, and their approach to study.

2.4. OLDER STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

Our knowledge of older students in adult education is based on 1418 responses to the questionnaire: 183 (13%) from distance education organisations; 653 (46%) from liberal adult education; and 582 (41%) from LEA institutions.

2.4.1. Age, Sex and Marital Status

The age of the respondents from all the institutions ranges from 60 to 89; overall there are more women than men. In liberal adult education 71% are women and in LEA courses 68%. However, in distance education men are in the majority (61%) (and 55% of Open University students are men).

TABLE 5

Age and sex of older students

	Distance Education		*Liberal Adult Education*		*LEA*		*Total*		*All*	*OU*
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Base=respondents	*183*		*653*		*582*		*486*	*932*	*1418*	*2254*
Age	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
60–64	39	50	29	32	23	39	29	36	34	52
65–69	40	26	37	31	48	30	42	30	34	32
70–74	14	18	19	24	23	21	20	22	21	13
75+	7	6	16	13	6	11	10	11	11	4
Sex										
Male	61		29		32		34		34	55
Female		39		71		68		66	66	45

TABLE 6

Marital status of older students

	Distance Education		*Liberal Adult Education*		*LEA*		*Total*		*All*	*OU*
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Base=respondents	*183*		*653*		*582*		*486*	*932*	*1418*	*2254*
Marital Status	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Single	13	32	5	21	5	17	7	20	16	10
Married	80	39	82	37	87	50	84	43	57	55
Other	7	29	12	41	6	32	9	37	27	35

2.4.2. Main Occupation of Older Students

Respondents told us their main occupation, or what it had been on retirement. More than two thirds (68%) of those in distance education institutions are or were in administration, management, teaching or other professions, as against a third of the LEA students and 55% of those in liberal adult education. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the LEA and liberal adult education students were in clerical and office jobs, and 13% of the LEA students were in sales and services. The number of respondents in farming and manufacturing was low in the overall sample, though higher in the LEA students (5% as against under 2% in the others). Nevertheless every main category of occupation appeared somewhere in our sample.

TABLE 7

Main occupation of older students

* occupation on entry		*Distance Education*	*Liberal Adult Education*	*LEA*	*Older OU Students (1985)**
	Base = respondents	183	653	582	2254
† both full-time housewives and those with part-time work	*Occupation*	%	%	%	%
	Full-time housewives	5	8	10	14†
	Housewives with part-time work	2	2	1	
‡ less than 0.5%	Armed forces	—	‡	—	‡
	Administrators / Managers	11	9	7	8
	Teachers	25	21	15	10
	Medical professions	8	6	5	7
	Social Welfare	3	4	2	‡
	Other professions and arts	19	12	5	3
	Scientists & Engineers	2	3	2	4
	Technical personnel	1	1	2	4
	Electrical, skilled trades	—	1	3	1
	Farming, manufacturing	2	1	5	1
	Communications, transport	2	1	2	1
	Clerical & Office	15	23	23	8
	Sales & Services	4	5	13	3
§ retired	Unemployed / retired	3	3	4	34§
	No response	‡	—	‡	—

2.4.3. Educational Background

It can be seen that there are some differences in the educational background of respondents in the different kinds of institution. The percentage of students with no formal qualifications is highest in the LEA institutions. It is lowest in the distance education bodies. Six in ten of the LEA students do not have qualifications for entry to higher education, while, on the other hand, 46% of those studying at a distance already have degrees, compared with 28% in liberal adult education.

We thought that one of the most striking findings of our work was the indication that most older students were continuing a lifelong involvement in education. The majority of respondents (74%) had had some kind of further education or training more than 5 years after leaving school, and 70% within 5 years of leaving school. Only 3% of all respondents said that they had had no involvement in further education before their present course.

TABLE 8

Highest educational qualification of older students

	Distance Education	*Liberal Adult Education*	*LEA*	*Older OU Students 1985*	*All OU Students 1985*
Base = respondents	183	653	582	2254	65,433
Qualification	%	%	%	%	%
No formal qualification	11	20	42	15	6
RSA/CSE	1	3	4	3	3
CSE1/GCE O Levels	6	13	14	23	21
GCE A Levels	13	13	6	12	19
ONC/OND	1	1	1	3	8
HNC/HND	4	3	2	6	11
Teaching Certificate	10	12	12	12	16
University Diploma	7	6	5	8	5
University Degree	31	21	8	11	6
Postgraduate Degree	15	7	3	1	1
No reply/other	2	1	4	4	6

Note: Equivalents to current qualifications were assessed for most respondents

TABLE 9

Further education and training after leaving school

	Distance Education	*Liberal Adult Education*	*LEA*	*Older OU Students (1982)*
Base = respondents	183	653	582	861
	%	%	%	%
None at all	—	2	6	2
Within 5 years	68	72	66	79
More than 5 years	80	74	70	73

2.4.4. Subjects of Study

We looked at the replies in the context of what subject areas were offered by each institution. We had the prospectuses of WEA, Extra-Mural and LEA institutions, and we analysed these and grouped the subjects offered into our ten categories. We were not able to do this for Wolsey Hall, London University (External Students) and Universities of the Third Age, whose information could not be classified in this way.

The percentage of older students in each subject area (Figure 2) corresponds very broadly to the proportion of each institutional curriculum occupied by courses in each area. In many cases therefore there appears to be no marked difference between older students and other adult students in their choice of subject. The one exception is physical activities; these play a large part in the programmes of LEA institutions, but the percentage of respondents in this area is small. The percentage of respondents studying foreign languages is fairly high. Arts subjects (the range of humanities subjects) were chosen by more than half the respondents in liberal adult education, where these subjects have a large place in the total programme. The numbers in social science are low, except for 30

London University External students who were studying Law, which had been included in the social science subjects. In the LEA institutions more than a quarter of the respondents were following courses in practical crafts. If we add the category 'Other', which includes many quasi-recreational activities, the percentage doing non-academic work rises to about 40%. Overall the percentage of respondents studying mathematics, science, and technology is low, but, as the analysis of the programmes shows, the number of courses offered in these in most institutions is low too. As we shall see, in the Open University, where courses in these fields are fully available, 25% of the older students chose them. Courses which are theoretical and specialised, but which do not fit into any of the other categories, have been described as Technical (non-manual).

2.4.5. Course Provision

LONDON UNIVERSITY (External Students)

Courses are offered in 9 faculties—Theology, Arts, Law, Music, Medicine, Science, Engineering, Economics, Education. There are also diploma courses in Clinical Pathology, Contemporary French Studies and Public Administration.

WOLSEY HALL

Correspondence tuition is provided in Languages, Arts, Social Science, Mathematics, and Computing Science, for professional qualifications in Law, Banking, Accountancy, Business Studies, Computing, Finance, Hotel and Catering Management and in a variety of technical skills required by the Business and Technical Education Council.

NATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE

Courses offered in 1985 (Total 84)

	%		%
Languages	12	Science/Technology	21
Arts	27	Physical	0
Social Science	17	Practice crafts	1
Mathematics	17	Technical non-manual	5
		Other	4

* Weekend and short courses were not included.

† Programmes of 12 U3As; other programmes could not be analysed by subject.

	LONDON EXTRA-MURAL* (Total 664 courses)		WEA (B,B&O) (381 courses)	U3A†
Courses offered in 1985		%	%	*Number* of U3As including subject *Number*
Languages		0	1	7
Arts		60	68	12
Social Science		26	7	2
Mathematics		1	1	4
Science/Technology		12	15	4
Physical		0	0	4
Practical crafts		0	0	5
Technical non-manual		2	6	3
Other		0	2	8

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

	Dorset	*North Essex*		*SE Essex*		*Leicester*		*Lancashire*	
Subject	Christchurch	Colchester	Frinton	Clacton	Southend	Coll. of AE	New Parks	Chas. Keene	Ribble Valley
	Number of Courses								
	224	460	113	138	279	250	137	70	73
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Languages	11	12	2	5	13	27	5	6	0
Arts	9	11	4	4	6	12	2	1	3
Social Science	3	2	1	5	1	1	1	0	0
Maths	3	8	3	9	7	—	1	1	0
Science/Technology	3	—	—	2	0	1	1	1	0
Physical	18	27	45	19	19	18	30	32	30
Practical Crafts	31	29	29	49	36	33	56	37	48
Technical non-manual	13	2	—	3	1	0	4	7	1
Other	8	8	17	9	18	9	1	14	18

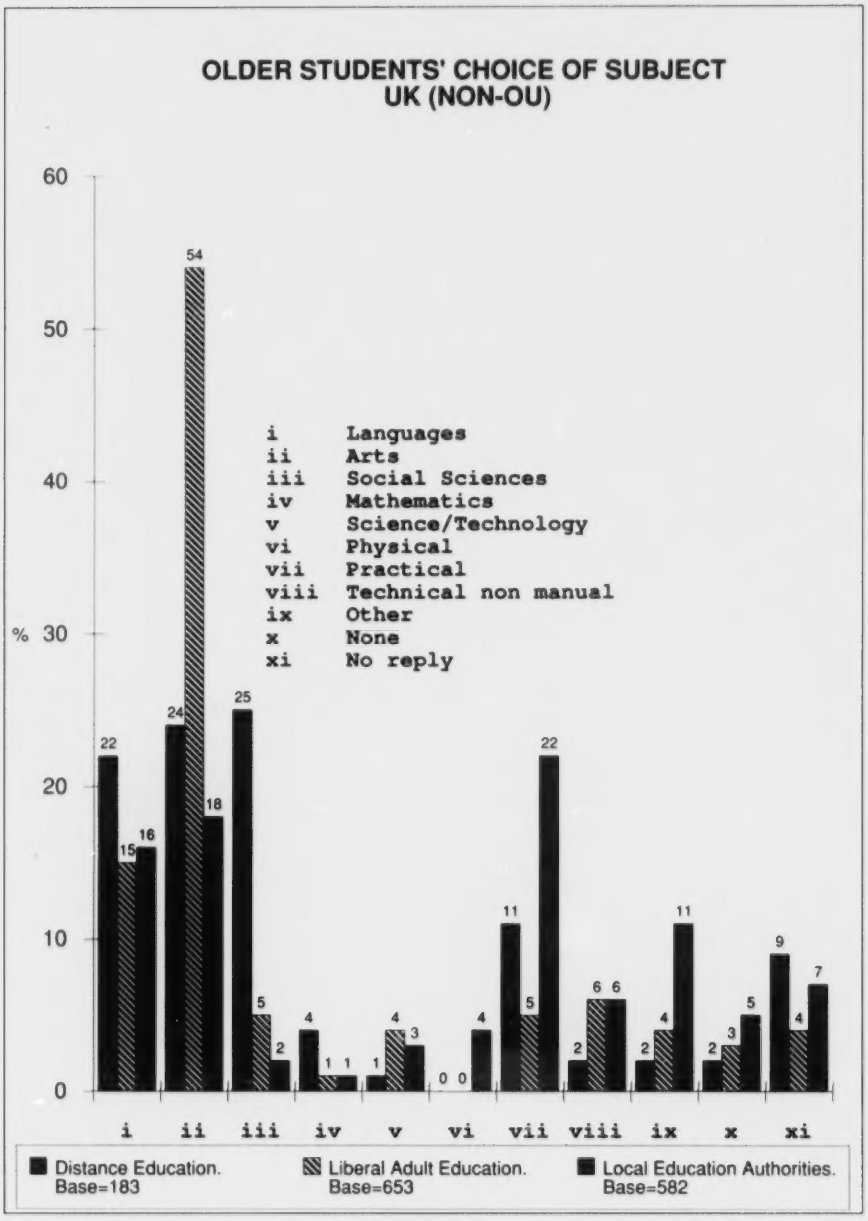


FIGURE 2

3. United Kingdom—Open University

3.1. TWO STUDIES OF OLDER OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Two studies of older students in the Open University were undertaken between 1982 and 1987. In both studies the principal research instrument was the postal questionnaire.

1. 1982–4

An examination of the characteristics and progress of older OU undergraduate students. The study involved:

a) A postal survey, in 1982, of all older students in four of the thirteen Regions of the OU (1042 questionnaires sent, 861 returned, a response rate of 83%). A random sample of OU students under the age of 60 were also surveyed (1418 questionnaires sent, 884 returned, a response rate of 62%). The questionnaire

covered; motivation, expectations, preparation, educational background, use of OU facilities and the experience of study.

b) An analysis of student demographics and course progress information for all 2,826 older students in 1982, taken from the Open University student data base.

c) Follow up face-to-face or telephone interviews with 60 older students.

2. 1985–7

An examination of the study methods and attitudes to study of older OU students. The study involved:

a) A postal survey, in 1985, of all currently registered older OU undergraduate students. (3206 questionnaires sent, 2254 returned, a response rate of 70%). The questionnaire covered; the amount of time spent studying, study activities, use of study aids and the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI).

b) An analysis of student demographics and course progress information for the 2254 respondents, taken from the Open University student data base.

We have used the two studies to construct a profile of older OU students and compare their experience and academic performance with other OU students and with older students studying in a range of educational organisations.

3.2. OLDER OU STUDENTS' BACKGROUNDS

About 21% of the UK population is aged 60 or over, but few older people take part in education programmes. Official estimates indicate that just over two million adults in the United Kingdom are involved in educational courses, that is about 5% of the adult population. In the Open University older students comprise just under 5% of the OU student body. Just over half (55%) of the student body is male and just under half (45%) is female. This ratio also applies to older students (see Table 5), even though census information reveals that nationally there are far more women than men in the over 60s age group. Older women are under-represented in the OU and it is a feature of adult education in the UK that older women are more likely to be found taking practical, recreational or unassessed courses than to be studying for higher level course leading to qualifications.

3.2.1. Occupational Background of OU Students

In 1985 a third (34%) of older students said they had retired at the time they started their OU degree, and of the rest, nearly a third were from the professions (administration, teaching, medicine, science) and 14% were housewives.

In the first study, in 1982, we looked more closely at occupation and occupational change. Again, a third (32%) of the students were retired on entry to the OU but by the time they completed the questionnaire 72% of those responding said they had retired and 13% expected to retire within three years. Thus it seems that some people wait until they have retired before starting their OU studies whereas others coming up to retirement age begin their degree as a bridge from occupation to retirement.

Students in 1982 were also asked about their main occupation(s) during adult life. Nearly six in ten (57%) had been in administration, teaching or other professions, 14% had been in clerical and office work, 7% were housewives, and 5% were in sales and the service sector. Almost a third of the respondents mentioned several occupations, and we were able to identify some aspects of their career development. One major change was the pursuit of a new career after leaving the armed forces, and another sizeable group was those who had left their previous occupation to take up teaching. (See Table 7.)

3.2.2. Educational Background of OU Students

In 1982 we compared the educational qualifications of older OU students with the total OU student body. A higher percentage of older students had no formal educational qualifications but a higher percentage also held a university degree or diploma. A similar pattern is evident in 1985 with 15% of the older students

having no formal qualifications compared with 6% of all OU undergraduates, but with 11% of the over 60s possessing a university degree as against only 6% in the undergraduate population overall. (See Table 8.)

These figures suggest that the OU appeals both to students who are highly qualified and to those who missed out on education when they were young, often because of family circumstances or the disruption caused by war, and who use the OU as a second chance to make up for lost opportunities. Altogether four in ten (41%) older OU students lack the educational qualifications normally required for university entrance. However, the success of the OU in attracting older students with few or no qualifications needs to be placed in context. Whilst one in five older OU students have no qualifications, up to four in five older people in the UK population may lack educational qualifications. Educational qualifications alone may not tell the whole story. It should not be assumed that absence of formal qualifications is the same as lack of interest or involvement in educational activities. Four out of five students surveyed in 1982 had good memories of their own school days and all but a handful had done some studying or taken part in training at work after leaving school. (See Table 9.)

3.2.3. Course Choice

The Open University has six faculties: Arts, Social Science, Mathematics, Science, Technology and Education. An OU student must first choose a Foundation Course in one of the first five faculties in order to start a degree programme. After completing a Foundation Course successfully, students could then make up their degree programme by doing a second Foundation Course, if they had no exemption for previous qualifications, and by choosing a series of higher level courses to make a total of six or eight credits for an ordinary or an honours degree.

Table 10 shows course choice, by faculty, for older students compared with all OU students. The most striking difference is the strong bias toward the Arts among older students. In the total OU population, under a quarter (22%) of the students are registered for Arts courses whilst just over half (52%) of the over 60s are taking courses from the Arts Faculty. However, older students are to be found on almost all OU courses, and it is notable that 25% of them choose courses in Maths, Science and Technology. In retirement some students choose courses which keep them in touch with the latest developments in their field. Others decide to explore a new subject area. One of the advantages of the OU's modular degree structure is that once students have passed a foundation course they can register for any of the 130 or so higher level courses offered by the OU, and it is not uncommon, for example, for a retired engineer to do some technology courses and also some history courses to pursue a long-standing interest in ancient Greece or Rome.

TABLE 10

Subjects of study—Open University*

Faculty	*Students aged 60 or over*†	*All students*†
	%	%
Arts (Humanities)	52	22
Social Science	17	17
Mathematics	8	16
Science	10	14
Technology	7	21
Education	2	6
Inter-disciplinary courses	4	4

* The Open University figures are not included in the chart showing subjects of study overall.

† Base = Finally registered students in 1985.

4. Federal Republic of Germany

4.1. METHODOLOGY

4.1.1. The German Questionnaire

The English survey was carried out by using a detailed questionnaire and the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI); this also formed the basis for the survey in the Federal Republic. Clearly it needed to be adapted to suit this country, as far as national differences in the educational system were concerned.

The German version of the questionnaire was extended in order to get data on some questions of our own. So the German questionnaire was considerably more extensive than the one used in the other three countries.

This supplementary section dealt with the following areas:

1. The experiences of older students with younger ones;
2. Views of older students;
3. The possible contribution to society by the older students arising from what they have learnt and their experience of study.

The complete questionnaire was pre-tested and discussed with older students in the University of Osnabrück.

4.1.2. Selection of the Sample

Included in the survey were German students who:

1. Were aged 60 or over in 1987, and
2. Were enrolled as associate students or (fully qualified) matriculated students in the selected universities in the Summer semester 1987.

The six universities selected for the survey were: Bremen, Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg, Oldenburg, Saarbrücken, and the Fernuniversität Hagen. A comprehensive survey in the BRD was impossible given the financial and research resources available. In choosing the universities we tried to take account of the following parameters:

Universities in different kinds of region: Frankfurt University in a city centre; Saarbrücken University in close proximity to France; Oldenburg University with a markedly rural catchment area.

Universities offering a wide range of study opportunities for older students: Frankfurt, with the University of the Third Age at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University. Oldenburg with provision for associate students and a special induction and preparatory programme for older students, as well as Saarbrücken with associate student provision which has special appeal for older students.

Universities of recent development and also traditional universities: Bremen and Oldenburg represent new universities and Freiburg and Frankfurt traditional ones.

The Fernuniversität is the one university whose structure corresponds to that of the OU in the UK.

Universities such as Dortmund and Marburg were not included because they had already obtained data in the course of pilot projects studying older students.

4.1.3. Distribution of the Questionnaire

First the Presidents of the selected universities were sent a letter in which they were asked to support the enquiry and to help with the provision of address lists and with the mailing. In order to comply with the terms of the German data protection legislation the mailing of the questionnaires could be done only by the universities taking part. Envelopes were prepared containing the questionnaire, an explanatory accompanying letter, and a stamped addressed envelope (for the return of the questionnaire). These envelopes were addressed and sent out by the universities. At the same time a further address list was prepared in order to be ready for the mailing of a reminder letter later. The completed questionnaires were sent by the older students, who had received them, to the Oldenburg research group.[1] In this way the anonymity of the respondents was assured.

4.1.4. Response

Of the total of 838 questionnaires sent out 559 were returned by October 1987. This is a 67% response.

TABLE 11

Questionnaire distribution and response by universities

Universities	*No. issued*	*No. returned*	*% responses*	*% of total responses*
Base	838	559	67	100
Bremen	65	42	65	8
Frankfurt	143	96	67	17
Freiburg*	31	27	87	5
Hagen	297	191	64	34
Oldenburg	84	70	83	12
Saarbrücken	218	133	61	24

* At the time when the survey was made there was no card index of associate students in Freiburg. The associate students received the questionnaire when they enrolled for the current semester. The number of older students may well be considerably higher.

There is evidence of a high degree of commitment by the older student respondents in the careful way in which they completed the questionnaire and in their very numerous additional comments, which made a qualitative amplification of certain aspects possible, and the large number of addresses, which were given, expressing interest in the results and willingness to take part in subsequent interviews.

4.2. OLDER STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

4.2.1. Age, Sex and Marital Status

TABLE 12

Age and sex of older students

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	559	358	201
Age	%	%	%
60–64	42	40	47
65–69	40	40	37
70–74	13	15	10
75+	5	5	6
Sex			
Male	64	64	
Female	36		36

82% of the older respondents are between 60 and 70 years old. This statement about the whole ten year period is particularly true of the men; of the older women students 47% are between 60 and 64 and 38% are between 65 and 69.

Women and Men. 64% of the older student respondents are men and 36% are women. The percentage of women matriculated at all Federal Republic universities is about 40%. As a comparison: according to official statistics, in the winter semester 1986/87 41% of all matriculated students, aged 50 or older, were women.[2] The number of women over 60 was surprisingly large, because they belong to a generation in which studying was something exceptional for women.

However, there are considerable differences in the sex ratios in the universities

taking part in the inquiry, considered separately. The largest percentage of respondents, 34%, came from the Fernuniversität and this distorts the sex ratio. In our survey 84% of the older students at the Fernuniversität are men. We may ask then whether women prefer conventional universities, and whether distance learning is men's province.

In this connection it is also interesting to look at the status of the older students in the universities.[3] (See Table 13.) There are considerably more women than men among the associate students, for whom formal qualifications, such as *Abitur*, are not required. The great majority of women in this age group did not even have the possibility in their youth of taking the *Abitur* examination.

TABLE 13

University student status by sex

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	559	358	201
Status	%	%	%
Associate students	65	61	73
Matriculated students	32	36	25
Other/No reply	3	3	2

The majority of 'Senior Students' are associate students. The largest proportions of associate students are in the universities of Saarbrücken and Oldenburg.

Marital status of older students.

TABLE 14

Marital status of older students

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	559	358	201
Marital Status	%	%	%
Single	12	4	25
Married	70	88	38
Other	18	0	37

Both in the categories 'Single' and 'Other' women are clearly over-represented. This raises the question that it is particularly women who live alone who are culturally active and mobile, since they, rather than the married women, are looking for 'new horizons'.

4.2.2. Main Occupation of Older Students

In their professions the older students come predominantly from non-manual occupations; many who were formerly in academic occupations are returning to the university. There is also a high proportion of clerical and office workers, as well as housewives.

Our data show that a fifth of these people come from middle rank and non-

TABLE 15

Main occupation on beginning study or on retirement

	BRD Universities
Base = respondents	559
Occupation	%
Full-time housewives and housewives with part-time work	11
Armed Forces	1
Administrators / Managers	11
Teachers	18
Medical professions	8
Social welfare	1
Other professions and arts (musicians, architects, lawyers, etc.)	10
Scientists and engineers	6
Technical personnel	4
Electrical, skilled trades	—
Farming, manufacturing	5
Communications, transport	3
Clerical and office	12
Sales and services	10
Unemployed	—

academic occupations. The status of the older women is clearly lower than that of the men. There is a higher proportion of them in the middle rank and a lower proportion in the higher status occupations.

Given the age groups of the respondents it is not surprising that only a small percentage (12%) are still in full-time work and 79% are retired and pensioners. Here too there are clear and interesting connections with the gender of the respondents.

TABLE 16

Present employment status by sex

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	559	358	201
Employment	%	%	%
In full-time work	12	15	6
Retired-pensioner	79	83	71
Unemployed	1	2	—
Housewives	8	—	23
Total	**100**	**64**	**36**

The older men students are more strongly represented among those still at work and the pensioners than the women. Yet it is noticeable that even among the older women, students were, or still are, in employment, and only a minority attending the university have the economically dependent status of housewife.

4.2.3. Educational Qualifications

TABLE 17

Highest educational qualification of older students

Base = respondents	559
Qualification	%
Below medium qualifications	17
A level, without studying	24
Fachschule, Fachoberschule, Fachhochschule (HNC, Teaching Certificate, University diploma)	27
Academic study (Degree level)	31
No reply	1

All the older German students have a school leaving certificate. Although 17%—and if one looks at older women, it is as much as 26%—do not have the necessary qualification for university study, they are taking part in the 'opening of the universities to older adults' because of the possibility of being associate students.

Further Education.

TABLE 18

Further education or training after completion of full-time education

Base = respondents	559
	%
None at all	8
Within 5 years	61
After 5 years	64

The majority of older students have in the course of their life, after the end of their formal education, taken part at least in further training, extra qualifications or general continuing education.

4.2.4. Course Choice

TABLE 19

First subject of study

	Hagen[1]	*Bremen*	*Frankfurt*	*Freiburg*	*Oldenburg*	*Saarbrücken*	*Total*
Base = respondents	191	42	96	27	70	133	%
Languages	1	—	10	21	7	14	10
Arts	31	18	61	14	38	94	46
Social Science	118	10	8	3	20	14	31
Maths	28	—	—	—	1	1	5
Science	5	—	3	3	2	5	3
Physical	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Practical	—	1	—	—	2	—	1
Other	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
No reply	7	2	3	—	3	5	4

Older students' study interests are clearly predominantly in the arts. Only about a tenth study a scientific subject. This is as true of those universities which offer the full academic range as for those which, for practical reasons or because of the content, offer older students courses in the humanities. The overcrowding of the universities and the *Numerus clausus* in medical and scientific subjects, as well as their school-like organisation, may have a discouraging effect on older students in their choice of subject. On the other hand knowledge of these subjects is no longer so interesting for people who have retired from work, since it is more often the 'human questions' which come to the forefront of their interest.

Compared with the other three countries the older German students are the least numerous in the study of languages. In Oldenburg, for example, older students are more inclined to go the *Volkshochschulen* for language courses than to the university. The German adult education system is very varied and attractive for older students in the area of language courses.

4.3. NOTES

1. Discussed in Arnold, B.; Schnittker, G.; Scholz, W.-D.: 'Ich warte auf den Tag an der Uni'.

2. Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden 17.1.1989.

3. See Chapter 1, p. 11.

4. Hagen offers distance education at university level. The first academic year started in 1975. The Fernuniversität is a comprehensive university, which means that the possibilities of admission to interdisciplinary and integrated studies are considerably enlarged.

All the courses are offered under the responsibility of five departments:

1. Mathematics and Computer Science.
2. Economics.
3. Law.
4. Electrical Engineering.
5. Education and Social Science. (The majority of older students were enrolled in courses offered in this faculty).

5. France

5.1. FRENCH ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that in France the widespread development of continuing education has taken place comparatively recently, mainly in the last two decades. The development of the Universities of the Third Age and Inter-Age was in the forefront of this movement and in practice these organisations were the principal providers of educational opportunities for older students. It was therefore decided to concentrate on this important experiment and to base the study of French older students on respondents from the Universities of the Third Age and Inter-Age.

5.2. THE SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

Two large Universities of the Third Age/Inter-Age in France took part in the survey. The University of the Third Age in Toulouse was the first to be created in France. It was set up in the Université des Sciences Sociales, attached to a research and teaching unit called at the time Unité d'Enseignement et de Recherche: Études Internationales, Développement et Langues Vivantes. There are now nearly 1200 students following a wide variety of courses in academic subjects and physical activities. The Université Inter-Ages de Nantes is organised in the Department of Continuing Education in the University of Nantes. Courses are offered not exclusively to third age students, though the majority, about 70%, are 60 or over, and a very small percentage are under 50. (Les Étudiants de l'An 11, Université Inter-Ages de Nantes, 1988). The courses offered cover a wide range of academic subjects, arts and crafts and other practical and physical activities. The third age students themselves play a considerable part in organising these activities, which is not so much the case in Toulouse. Nantes has about 2,800 older students.

5.3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In Toulouse for practical reasons of ease of distribution and response the questionnaires were issued only to students in foreign language classes at different levels in October, though a considerable number of these students were following courses in other subjects too. The questionnaires were distributed to students in classes by the teachers and were returned to the teachers.

In Nantes the questionnaires were distributed to students in classes in June 1987 or sent by post. As this was at the end of the university year the classes selected were those where the course was still continuing. The fact that this was done at the end of the university year explains the low response. In the event a majority of the respondents came from language classes.

In the French sample we therefore have a sample which is relatively homogeneous from the point of view of the kind of study which the students were doing. These responses are of particular interest in the area of study methods.

5.4. RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TABLE 20

Questionnaire distribution and response

	Number of questionnaires issued	*No. of usable questionnaires returned*
Université Inter-Ages de Nantes	300	77
Université du Troisième Age de Toulouse	120	92
TOTAL		**169**

In both Toulouse and Nantes the number of student groups selected was comparatively small, but the response as a whole was quite good.

5.5. OLDER STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

5.5.1. Age, sex and marital status of older students

TABLE 21

Age and sex of older students

				Nantes		*Toulouse*	
	Total	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Base = respondents	169	73	96	33	44	40	52
Age	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
60–64	40	32	47	30	43	33	50
65–69	41	47	37	52	36	43	37
70–74	14	16	13	15	14	18	12
75+	5	6	4	3	7	8	2
Sex							
Male	43			43		43	
Female	57				57		57

The percentages for age are almost identical, showing about 81% is equally divided between 60–64 and 65–69 years of age. 14% is constant for the 70–74 bracket.

The same distribution is also reflected in the gender breakdown, 57% female, 43% male.

TABLE 22

Marital Status of Older Students

				Nantes		*Toulouse*	
	Total	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Base = respondents	169	73	96	33	44	40	52
Marital status	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Single	9	0	17	0	30	0	5
Married	72	93	55	91	50	95	60
Other	19	7	28	9	21	5	35

Data concerning marital status are again very similar for both institutions, with Toulouse showing a slightly higher percentage of married and 'other' status students. Nantes reflects the opposite situation with slightly fewer married and 'other', but more single people.

5.5.2. Occupation

There are some slight differences between Nantes and Toulouse concerning the students' occupation on retirement. The table presents clerical workers, administration and managers, teachers and housewives as the largest groups. While the students still generally represent non-manual occupations in both samples, the rank order differs somewhat between them. Nantes students come first in the clerical and office category (22%), the administrators and managers (20%), then

TABLE 23

Main occupation of older students

	Total	*Nantes*	*Toulouse*
Base = respondents	169	77	92
Occupation	%	%	%
Housewives*	10	7	12
Armed Forces	1	1	0
Administrators/Managers	16	20	13
Teachers	12	7	16
Medical professions	8	16	2
Social welfare	1	1	1
Other professions & arts	6	9	4
Scientists and engineers	5	5	5
Technical personnel	5	0	10
Electrical/skilled trades	1	1	0
Farming/manufacturing	1	3	0
Communications/transport	1	0	2
Clerical and office	18	22	14
Sales and services	6	7	7
Unemployed/retired	4	0	7

* both full-time housewives and those with part-time work

TABLE 24

Highest education qualification of older students

	Total	*Nantes*	*Toulouse*
Base = respondents	169	77	92
Qualification	%	%	%
1. No formal qualification / *aucun diplôme / keine formale Qualifikation*	5	6	2
2. RSA / CSE / *Certificat d'études / Volksschulabschluss*	8	10	7
3. CSE1 / GCE O / *BEPC / Mittlere Reife*	14	18	11
4. GCE A / *Baccalauréat / Abitur*	19	16	22
5. ONC / OND / *BTS / DUT / Abschluss einer höheren Handelsschule*	9	5	12
6. HNC / HND / *Diplôme professional du 1er cycle / Fachschulabschluss*	8	8	9
7. Teaching certificate / *École Normale / Abschluss an einem Pädagogischen Institut*	1	3	0
8. University diploma / *DEUG ou 1er cycle universitaire / Abschluss einer Fachhochschule*	4	1	7
9. University degree / *Licence ou Maîtrise universitaire / Diploma / Examen / Magister*	15	8	22
10. Postgraduate / *3ème cycle universitaire / Promotion / Habilitation*	15	30	2

medical professions. Housewives follow far behind. Toulouse students report first being teachers (16%), then clerical and office workers (14%), then administrators and managers (13%), followed by housewives (12%). The differences between these percentages do not appear large enough to generalise further on the profile of each local sample, other than their previous identification as non-manual. One interesting observation, however, is the near absence (2%) of the medical profession in Toulouse.

5.5.3. Educational Background

Table 24 shows a wide range between intermediate-level qualifications (*BEPC* and *Baccalauréat*) and university degrees and post-graduate work. The two local samples reflect the same dominance at the upper end, but the figures spread out differently thereafter: Nantes shows higher percentages with *BEPC* and post-graduate qualifications and Toulouse higher percentages with *Baccalauréat* and university first degrees. Overall the differences between the two samples seem minimal.

TABLE 25

Further education and training after leaving school

	Total	*Nantes*	*Toulouse*
Base = respondents	169	77	92
	%	%	%
None at all	15	5	23
Within 5 years	58	64	53
After 5 years	53	64	44

Comparison of details in the responses in the two samples reveals certain similarities among those continuing their education within 5 years: 27% of Nantes students obtained professional qualifications, while 15% of Toulouse students did the same, as well as 15% obtaining vocational training, categories which may be seen as similar on a practical level. Both samples report approximately 12% of further university studies.

A difference appears between the two samples, however, concerning education more than 5 years after school. While similar percentages appear for work-related vocational training (23% for Nantes, 19% for Toulouse), only Nantes reports further study for interest, not for qualifications.

5.5.4. Subjects of Study

The data are influenced by the fact that distribution of questionnaires in Toulouse concerned language students only, some of whom are involved in other activities. The responses of these students participating in programmes other than languages are not represented here. Other subjects were mentioned in the questionnaire responses, but we have quoted results only for the subjects which respondents cited as their first subject. Nantes, however, reveals quite a high percentage of language students. 30% of the Nantes students reported that they were studying at least one more subject of study in addition to the one which they quoted as their main interest (or possibly the subject of the course which they were attending when the questionnaires were distributed).

TABLE 26

Subjects of study

	Total	*Nantes*	*Toulouse*
Base = respondents	169	77	92
Subject	%	%	%
Languages	86	73	97
Arts	6	12	2
Social Science	1	3	—
Mathematics	5	12	—
Science	—	—	—
Physical	1	1	—
Practical	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—

Course Provision

The following courses were available to students in the two French Universities of the Third Age and Inter-Age.

INTER-AGE UNIVERSITY NANTES

Subject	*Number of Classes*
Languages	27
Arts	28
Social Science	7
Mathematics & Computing	4
Science	2
Physical Education	12
Practical	4
Technical non-manual	—
Other	2

Lecture courses on: history, literature, art, current affairs, medicine, science.

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE TOULOUSE

Subject		*Number of Classes*
Foreign Languages		9
(Spanish	4)	
(English	4)	
(German	1)	
Literature (reading groups)		2
Artistic creativity—drawing & painting workshops		3
Choir		1
Physical Education		3

General lectures (one hour per week) on: foreign civilisations, politics, history of art, regional history, philosophy, foreign literature, archaeology.

6. Belgium

The French version of the questionnaire was the one which was used in Toulouse and Nantes, except that the question on educational qualifications was changed, so that descriptions applicable to the Belgian system were used.

6.1. SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The survey was carried out among the members of C.E.P.U.L.B. (Conseil de l'Éducation Permanente de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles). The total body of members of C.E.P.U.L.B.—at present numbering about 1,400 mainly retired people—follow cultural and scientific courses which are organised specially for them and which cover all the disciplines in the humanities and the sciences. Among these is a *minority*, who are associate students who do not wish to obtain a certificate and so (with very few exceptions) do not take an examination, but who follow courses chosen from the official programmes of the Faculties and Institutes of the University (at present more than 100 courses). A limited number of registrations is authorised and this minority at present consists of 400 members. It was in this group that 79 questionnaires were distributed, as it was thought that the questionnaire was not suited to students who did not belong to this minority.

6.2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The 79 questionnaires were distributed by the staff in the reception office which is open for students before and after sessions. The staff were able to identify students who were attending Faculty courses and give them questionnaires. These were later returned to the reception office.

Some questionnaires were also issued to mature students who were following courses for qualification in computing, social science and social work. These were issued by teachers in class and were collected in by them.

6.3. RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

72 of the 79 questionnaires issued were returned. Of these 61 were from members aged 60 or over. The results of the enquiry are drawn from these 61 replies. 63 replies were also received from students following courses for qualification, and these will be analysed separately.

Though the numbers are not large the response from the Belgian students was good.

6.4. OLDER STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

6.4.1. Age, Sex and Marital Status

TABLE 27

Age and sex of older students

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	61	33	28
Age	%	%	%
60–64	49	39	61
65–69	31	42	18
70–74	13	9	18
75+	7	9	4
Sex			
Male	54		
Female	46		

TABLE 28

Marital status of older students

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Base = respondents	61	33	28
Marital status	%	%	%
Single	15	12	18
Married	64	79	46
Other	20	6	36
No Reply	2	3	0

Nearly half of the respondents are aged between 60 and 64 and 80% of the total is between 60 and 69 years old.

More than half of the respondents are men, although there are many more women among the C.E.P.U.L.B. students as a whole. It appears that more men than women are attracted by the cultural depth which attendance at Faculty courses offers them—or else have more time to attend them.

6.4.2. Occupation

A wide variety of occupations is represented. Those which predominate are administration, medicine, science, engineering, teaching and clerical and office work. There are none from the armed forces or housewives.

TABLE 29

Main occupation of older students

	Total
Base = respondents	61
Occupation	%
Full-time housewives	0
Housewives with part-time work	0
Armed forces	0
Administrators/managers	16
Teachers	15
Medical professions	15
Social welfare	0
Other professions & arts	3
Scientists and engineers	10
Technical personnel	8
Electrical/skilled trades	0
Farming/manufacturing	0
Communications/transport	3
Clerical & office	21
Sales & services	5
Unemployed/retired	0
No reply	4

6.4.3. Educational Background

About a third of the respondents had attended a university and obtained a degree (after 4 or 5 years of study), or even a postgraduate higher degree; more than a third have a teaching qualification at primary or secondary level, or a professional or higher technical qualification; and the highest educational quali-

fication of almost a quarter of the respondents is the certificate which is an entry qualification for higher education.

The majority of the respondents are either people who already have a university education, but want to continue or diversify it or else people who are fairly highly qualified, but not at university level, who are taking the opportunity to attend university courses, which they have not had in the course of their professional life.

It is a matter of principle not to ask members of C.E.P.U.L.B. about their educational qualifications, so it is not possible to compare the background of the sample with that of the student body as a whole. It is believed that the range is very wide, though probably with quite a high proportion of higher level qualifications.

TABLE 30

Highest educational qualification of older students

	Total
Base = respondents	61
Qualification	%
Aucun diplôme	0
Certificat d'études de base (de niveau primaire)	0
Certificat de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur	7
Diplôme d'aptitude à accéder à l'enseignement supérieur	15
Certificat de qualification de l'enseignement secondaire (études secondaires à finalité)	8
Diplôme d'enseignement supérieur de type long	13
(y compris diplôme d'instituteur ou de régent)	21
Diplôme de candidatures universitaires	3
Diplôme de licencié	10
Diplôme de 3e cycle universitaire, ingénieur, médecin, etc	18
No reply	5

* The categories are presented in the order in which they appeared in the Belgian questionnaire.

TABLE 31

Further education and training after leaving school

	Total
Base = respondents	61
	%
None at all	0
Within 5 years	72
After 5 years	75

Three-quarters of the respondents report that they have continued to study after the completion of their formal education.

6.4.4. Subjects of Study

Over 130 courses in the Free University of Brussels covering the main disciplines were open to C.E.P.U.L.B. members. They are, however, permitted to enrol for a maximum of two courses. For the respondents the arts courses were clearly the

most popular (more than 60%). Social sciences come second and science and technology in third place.

TABLE 32

Subjects of study

	Total
Base = respondents	61
Subject	%
Languages	5
Arts (Humanities)	62
Social Science	13
Mathematics	3
Science & Technology	8
Physical	—
Practical	—
Other	3
No reply	6

COURSE PROVISION

Courses in the Free University of Brussels open to C.E.P.U.L.B students.

The courses offered were as follows:

Disciplines	*No. of Courses*
Languages and Literature	23
Arts (Humanities)	79
Social Science	12
Computing	2
Science	10
Physical Education	6
Practical	—
Other	1

Numbers are given above for early enrolments and final numbers were higher than those above. About 400 older students enrolled for these courses.

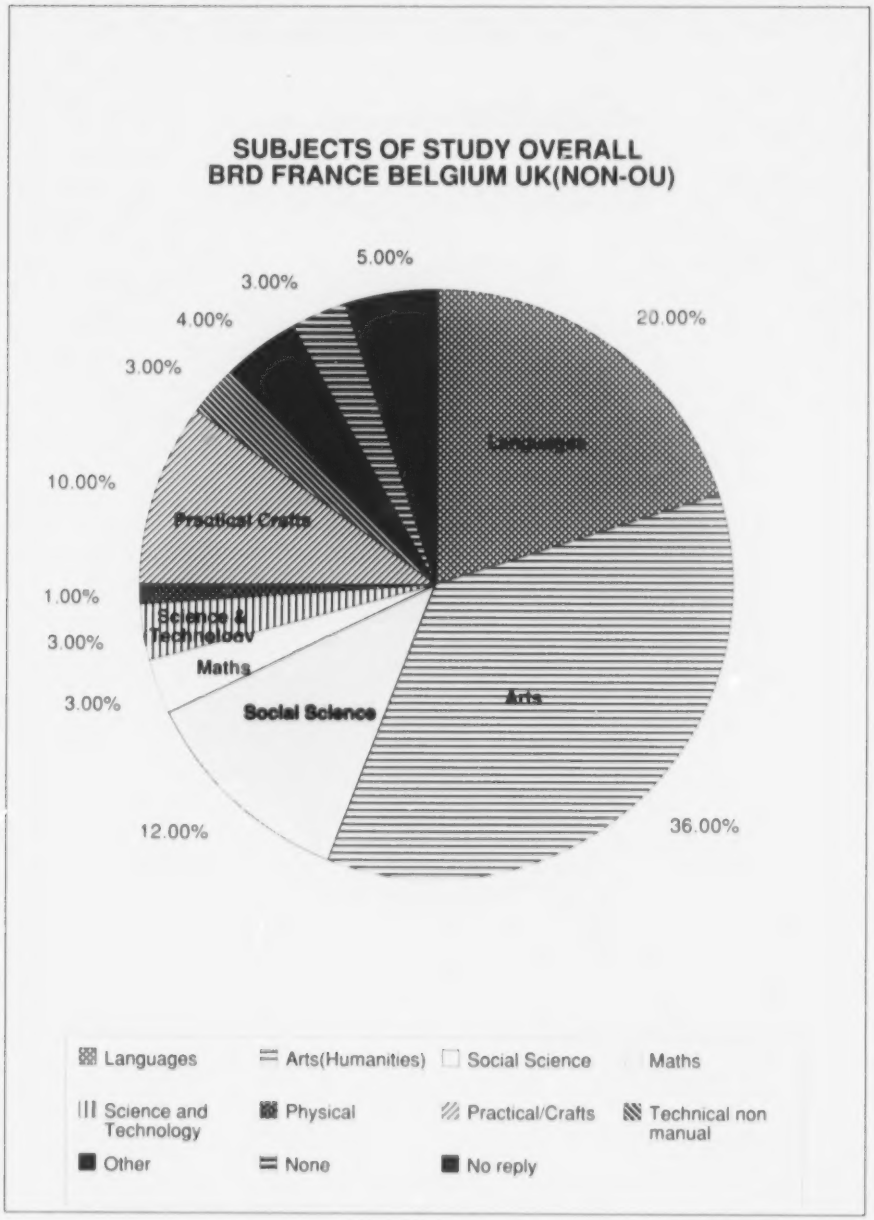

SUBJECTS OF STUDY OVERALL
BRD FRANCE BELGIUM UK(NON-OU)
5.00%
3.00%
4.00%
20.00%
3.00%
10.00%
Practical Crafts
1.00%
3.00%
Maths
3.00%
Social Science
12.00%
Arts
36.00%
Languages
Arts(Humanities)
Social Science
Maths
Science and Technology
Physical
Practical/Crafts
Technical non manual
Other
None
No reply

FIGURE 3

3

Students in Action

1. Introduction

In this chapter we move on from the presentation of the data for each of the four contributing countries to a comparative analysis of the responses, concentrating on the students' own views of the educational context in which they study. We use material mainly drawn from Section 2 of the questionnaire.

In making these international comparisons we have to bear in mind that the national samples were of rather different composition: there were substantial differences both in the numbers of responses from each country and in the types of institution from which they were drawn. The respondents were studying in different kinds of institution, following courses at different levels. They were studying in distance education in the UK Open University, in the German Fernuniversität, in London University and in correspondence colleges, (the courses ranging, according to the type of institution, from those at degree level to practical and leisure ones); in university courses in the German universities and in the Université Libre de Bruxelles; in a variety of courses in the UK liberal education institutions and in the Universities of the Third Age in the UK and in France; and in a range of courses at lower academic level in the UK local education authority institutions. Because of these differences we have not attempted in every case to give four-country averages, omitting them where they might seem to be misleading; but we were able to make some comparisons between similar institutions in different countries. A central point, however, is that in all four countries older students look upon these provisions as offering a variety of opportunities for learning, from which they make their choice. We needed to ask what such people had in common.

With these reservations in mind, we believe it useful to look at all the responses of all the students in all four countries within one framework. In this chapter, therefore, we look at the data on the motivation of older people undertaking study; at the life experience which they bring to their studies; and at the methods they use in the process of study. During our enquiries we came to see that the methods older students use reflect the teaching styles of the institutions in which they learn; so we have added a section on the learning context in which these students work. We end the chapter with selected extracts from the open-ended comments the students wrote on their questionnaires, and which reflect and enlarge on the issues that are raised by the questionnaire responses themselves.

2. Motivation

Why do people aged 60 and over want to study? The reasons which respondents give are remarkably similar in all four countries and in all types of institution. Most often quoted are an interest in a particular subject or area; keeping an active mind; and personal development. When we looked at all the reasons given, between 60% and 70% of all the replies mentioned the first two, and nearly 50% mentioned personal development. Around 30% mentioned other reasons, such as being better educated, making up for lack of opportunity in the past, filling in leisure time and making new friends; but only a small percentage of these appear as the main reasons, and the percentage interested in getting a qualification is also small. We noted that the French respondents were almost all studying a lan-

guage (this arises from the population invited to respond). Although many did not cite an interest in a specific subject as a main motive, as might have been expected, such an interest might be inferred. Figures 4 and 5 (overleaf) show the responses from the four countries and also the total response, where the overall similarity is apparent.

When we looked at the responses from men and women separately, we found very little difference in the reasons they gave for studying. In the few cases where differences appear this may have some link with the type of institution and study chosen. For example, few men in the German sample give making friends as a reason, but this is not surprising considering that many had elected to use the distance learning methods of the Fernuniversität. It is worth noting, however, that open-ended comments also suggest that in some cases it is only in the course of studying that the opportunities for social contact are recognised and valued. The French U3A respondents, particularly the women, quoted an interest in a particular subject less often than the students in other countries, but this must be seen in the light of the comment in the first paragraph above.

In the UK in the earlier study of older Open University students who were studying in 1982, the most frequently mentioned reasons for studying were to make up for lack of opportunity in the past, to keep an active mind, to continue developing, and to get a degree, and these are most frequently mentioned also as the main reason. Developing an interest in a particular area was less frequently given as a main reason than in our international survey. The option given in the 1982 questionnaire was 'to get a degree', and not 'to get a qualification' as in the later questionnaire, and so the response here may perhaps indicate having a specific goal, rather than an interest in a qualification as such. Otherwise Open University responses are similar to those of the respondents in the later surveys.

In conclusion, the reasons for studying given by the majority of all respondents, of both sexes, suggest that they are motivated by a serious interest in study for its own sake. There are small differences in the motives expressed by students in different kinds of institution, but in all four countries the motives given by older men and women, as students, are very similar.

3. The Students' Experience of Education

3.1. ENJOYMENT OF SCHOOLING

In looking at the experience of education by the older students in the four countries we were very conscious that this stretched back to the 1930s, and in some cases earlier, and was thus marked by the period of inter-war depression, the Second World War itself, and the period of disruption and reconstruction after the war. It is important to bear this in mind when we look at their comments on whether they enjoyed their schooling.

TABLE 33

Enjoyment of schooling

	UK (Non-OU)	*West Germany*	*France*	*Belgium*
	%	%	%	%
Very much / On the whole	81	87	93	87
Not very much / Not at all	17	12	6	10
No reply	2	1	1	3

It is clear that people who continue studying after age 60 are overwhelmingly people who had had a satisfying experience of schooling: in none of the countries and institutions we studied did the figure for 'enjoyment' fall below 70% but there were some differences. In general women were more satisfied with their

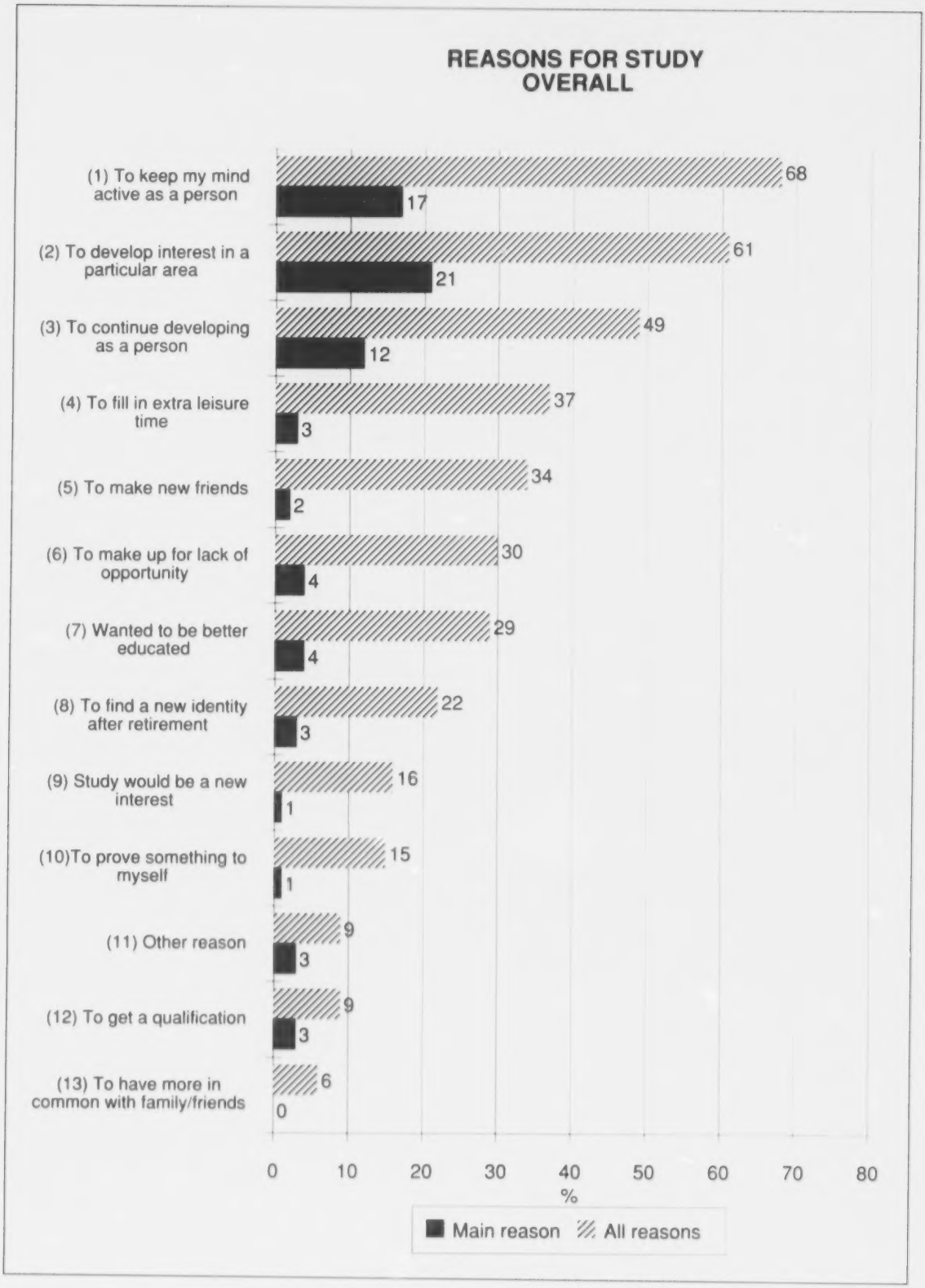
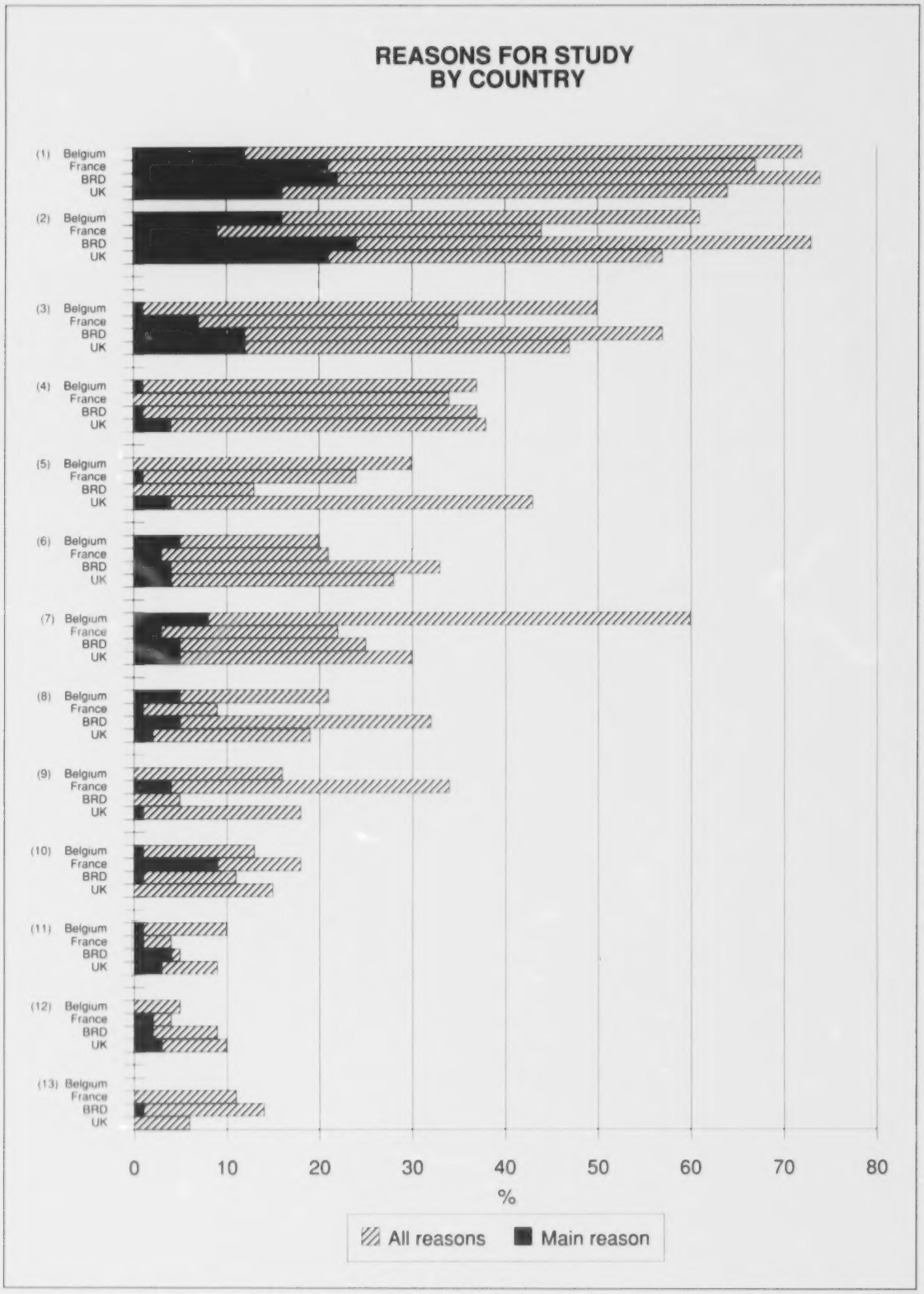

REASONS FOR STUDY
OVERALL
(1) To keep my mind active as a person
68
17
(2) To develop interest in a particular area
61
21
(3) To continue developing as a person
49
12
(4) To fill in extra leisure time
37
3
(5) To make new friends
34
2
(6) To make up for lack of opportunity
30
4
(7) Wanted to be better educated
29
4
(8) To find a new identity after retirement
22
3
(9) Study would be a new interest
16
1
(10)To prove something to myself
15
1
(11) Other reason
9
3
(12) To get a qualification
9
3
(13) To have more in common with family/friends
6
0
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
%
Main reason
All reasons

FIGURE 4


REASONS FOR STUDY
BY COUNTRY
(1) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(2) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(3) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(4) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(5) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(6) Belgium
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BRD
UK
(11) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(12) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
(13) Belgium
France
BRD
UK
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
%
All reasons
Main reason

FIGURE 5

schooling they had had than were men. Looking at countries, the French older students were most satisfied with their schooling, those in Germany and Belgium only a little less so, and the UK students least of all. This dissatisfaction was most marked in two UK groups—the men who were now studying in local authority classes (24% dissatisfied) and the men studying in distance teaching institutions (26% dissatisfied).

3.2. INTERRUPTION OF EDUCATION

We analysed the responses to this question, including the many extra details the respondents gave. We found in particular more detailed evidence of the effects of the Second World War, and the circumstances preceding and following it. Especially in Germany it is clear that not merely military service in itself but also such things as compulsory labour, being taken prisoner of war, compulsory resettlement and Nazi persecution all had their effect. Figure 6 illustrates this diversity of causes.

Necessarily, the countries directly affected by the fighting show different responses from those areas, such as the UK and certain parts of the other countries, which were not overrun by troops, though they may have been affected by air activity, by blockade, or by other social and economic factors arising from the war.

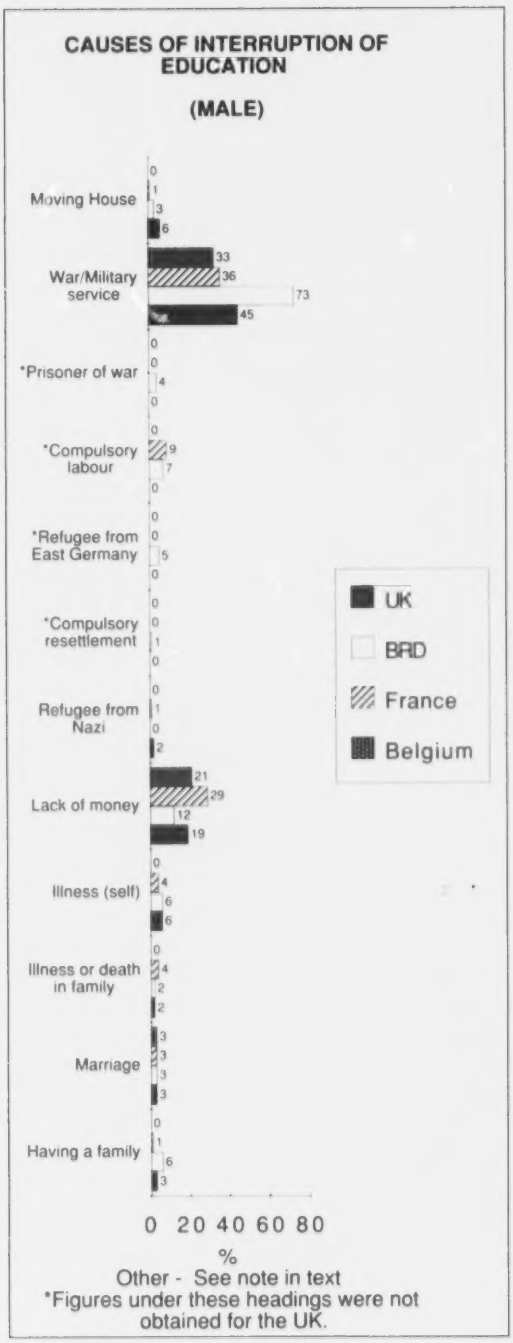
Conscription and military service had played an important part in the experience of many of the male older students in our survey, and, not surprisingly, gender differences in the responses to the question on interruptions were more marked than in any other part of the survey. Figure 6 therefore shows separate detail for men and women. We were also able to identify a number of other causes, noted as 'Other' in the figure. The percentages in every case were small, but the causes real. They included de-Nazification, leaving school between 13 and 15 to start work, lack of parental interest, and work pressure, including being sent overseas.

There seem to be marked national differences in these data (though we must note the small bases for France and Belgium). German men experienced markedly more interruptions to their education from war and military service than any others. French and Belgian men were much more conscious of the effect of lack of money on their educational progress, while UK men were much more likely than others to see interruptions arising from a variety of personal and domestic factors (illness, marriage, family, moving house). Male students in the UK seem particularly conscious of having to make up, after retirement, for opportunities lost in early life. Surprisingly perhaps, this attitude is less marked elsewhere in Europe.

In this age group the traditional view of the family and the house being the woman's concern was likely to prevail, and so it is not surprising that more women than men reported having had their education interrupted by domestic problems. This applied most to the French women, and then the German, with the Belgian being most emancipated in this matter. Belgian and German women had been significantly affected by the war; and French and Belgian women, like their male counterparts, were the groups which most attributed interruptions to lack of money.

3.3. DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY CURRENT STUDIES

Very few of these older students could identify domestic difficulties associated with their current studies. This was so marked that a table of findings would be redundant. Between 80% and 90% in all categories said that they experienced no real domestic difficulties in their current studies, and the 'Yes—many' response nowhere reached 10%. It is notable that women older students are as untroubled by domestic difficulties as older men. A very large majority of men in all four countries are married, but in all samples, except the French one, more than half the women (over 60% in Germany) are single, widowed or divorced, and so not living in a traditional family situation. The responses of older OU students to this



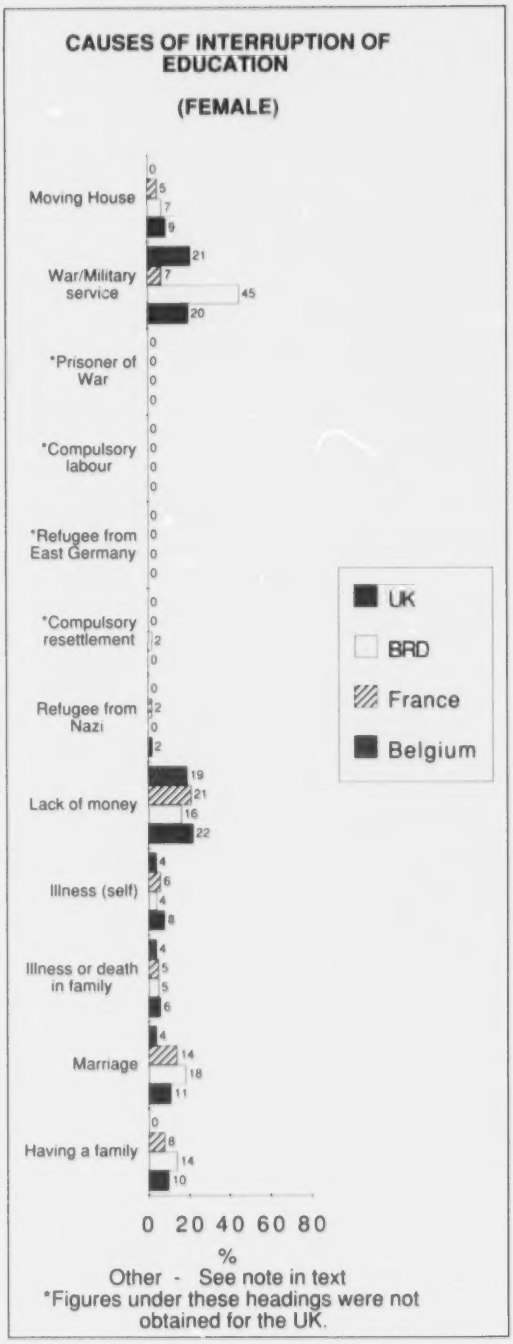


FIGURE 6

question were compared with the responses of younger students who had completed a similar questionnaire. Many of the younger students mentioned domestic difficulties, in contrast to a much lower percentage of older students. This suggests that older students are mostly at the age when they become less closely involved in the demands of the traditional family. Many of both sexes mention the support they get from their partners and children in making their decision to study, as well as during their studies. We think that these findings are striking evidence of the very positive attitude to study amongst the older people who responded to our survey.

4. Methods of Studying

We looked at how students organised their studies, in order to gain an insight into their learning strategies and the effectiveness of their study techniques. We found it difficult to make direct comparisons between students from different backgrounds taking a wide range of courses in four countries. Therefore we have tried, as far as possible to focus on those aspects which were not course-specific and which might be common to most students' experience of study. However it is important to acknowledge that the nature of a course in terms of duration, level, workload and assessment does shape the character of the study activity.

4.1. ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE CONCENTRATED STUDY

There are some stereotypes which associate age with loss of memory, and powers of concentration. These negative images of older people tiring quickly and unable to think or work for more than a very short time span are not supported by older student responses to a question about their ability to undertake concentrated study. In all countries approximately four-in-ten say they can sustain concentrated study for one to two hours and 20%–30% claim they are able to study for two to three hours at a time. Only a handful of respondents admit to being able to study for less than 30 minutes before needing a break. Just under half of the German students (45%) say that they can concentrate on study for 2–3 hours or longer; many of these are taking demanding courses, for example in the Fernuniversität, which need this concentration.

On the other hand, 75% of the French students say that they do concentrated study from 30 minutes to 2 hours, which may well be appropriate for the language courses studied by the majority of the respondents. A third of the Belgian students claim to concentrate on study for two hours or more.

Older students in the UK seem very similar to their counterparts in Germany, France and Belgium. Between 40% to 50% of all those responding say they can maintain a serious level of study for one to two hours. However those taking more demanding academic courses, as in the case of the German students, are more likely to believe that they can study for longer and a quarter of the OU students doing a degree say they can study for two to three hours at a stretch compared with just over 10% of those taking general interest and leisure classes; but 15% gave no reply, which perhaps shows that they did not think that their chosen activity involved concentrated study.

TABLE 34

Ability to undertake concentrated study

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
	%	%	%	%	%
Less than 30 min.	*	1	0	1	*
30–60 min.	11	37	28	21	20
1–2 hours	41	38	41	42	47
2–3 hours	29	17	20	14	21
More than 3 hours	16	4	10	5	5
No reply	3	4	2	15	6

* 0.5% or less

4.2. PATTERNS OF STUDY

Students were asked to indicate how much time they spent in studying in a typical week. The responses must be treated cautiously, at best offering only a general indication, because the typical week is an ideal and in reality the study patterns often vary greatly and no two weeks are the same.

It is apparent that many older students devote a significant amount of time to their studies. Again, in sharp contrast to stereotypes which assume that as people grow older they lose interest in learning, we find that in the four countries most older students are engaged in study activities on several days each week and close to one-in-five say they do some studying every day. There are considerable differences between countries in the number of hours per day spent in study, reflecting the demands of courses, but 30% to 50% of older students may work from two to four hours on study days.

The pattern of study of the French students has to be judged from the 41% who replied to this question; the number of hours per day is under 2 hours for the majority, but more than half give 2 or 3 or more days a week to study. A third of the Belgian respondents work between 2 and 5 days a week for 2–4 hours, 16% claim to work every day.

The study habits of the UK and German students are very similar. In the UK student study patterns are largely determined by the requirements of the course taken. Those doing short unassessed courses are often involved in study related work for a couple of hours or so on two or three days a week. Those doing a degree are more likely to study for longer each week and for a longer period each day. Over half of the German students, two-thirds of the distance education students and four-fifths of the OU students do some studying on most days or every day and many work for two to four hours a day. From interviews and student comments it is clear that many older students develop the habit of regular study, perhaps working for two or three hours most days, and this pattern provides the discipline needed to cope with the heavy demands of university study whilst

TABLE 35

Organisation of study: Days per week devoted to study

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
Days per week	%	%	%	%	%
1	8	16	20	17	7
2–3	34	48	45	31	21
4–5	35	16	17	18	42
Every day	19	15	16	13	22
No reply	4	5	2	21	8

TABLE 36

Organisation of study: Hours per day devoted to study

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
Hours per day	%	%	%	%	%
0–2	17	61	42	43	23
2–4	42	28	47	29	50
4–6	27	5	8	5	15
7+	10	0	2	1	2
No reply	4	6	1	12	10

leaving time for other interests and commitments. For these older students studying seems to be the equivalent of a part-time job.

4.3 STUDY ACTIVITIES

An overview of study activities in a 'typical week' is offered in Table 37 which shows the time spent attending classes, writing assignments or preparing for exams and in reading and additional private study.

Face-to-face contact, either in tutor led classes or peer discussion groups, is the principal teaching medium throughout most sectors of education and some of the more modern distance teaching institutions also include opportunities for some contact. Where tutorial provision is available there are clear differences between France and the UK on the one hand and West Germany and Belgium on the other. Many French and UK students have one or two hours teacher contact a

TABLE 37

Study activities

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
Hours spent per week	%	%	%	%	%
ATTENDANCE IN CLASS—TIME SPENT IN TUTORIALS					
1	1	10	2	2	29
2	7	20	6	25	24
3	4	4	8	5	3
4	12	3	13	10	5
5	3	2	8	3	1
6	8	1	16	4	2
7	2	1	3	1	*
8+	24	1	9	2	1
No reply	38	59	34	47	34
HOURS SPENT ON PREPARING ASSESSED WORK					
1	2	2	8	6	7
2	5	2	5	8	18
3	2	1	3	3	12
4	6	2	3	3	9
5	3	—	—	1	5
6	3	—	—	1	5
7–10	4	—	2	2	8
11+	3	—	—	*	4
No reply	70	93	77	75	30
TIME SPENT IN READING AND EXTRA STUDY					
1	4	11	8	8	18
2	12	16	30	14	19
3	8	6	7	4	7
4	10	5	8	4	5
5	9	3	5	2	3
6	7	2	8	2	3
7–10	15	5	6	4	3
11+	9	3	2	2	1
No reply	27	50	26	57	39

* 0.5% or less

week, but half of the Belgian and German respondents attend classes for 4 or more hours per week and nearly one-in-ten Belgian students and nearly a quarter of the German students for eight or more hours a week; but the replies come mainly from associate students (*Gasthörer*) who are attending university courses.

With the exception of older undergraduates in the UK few older students are involved in courses or educational programmes which have an assessment component, and a negligible amount of time is devoted to assessed work. However, around half to three-quarters of the students in all four countries undertook additional reading around their chosen subject or other study related work. There are no great differences between the countries here, except in the case of the Open University where comparatively little extra reading is required, as essential study material is contained in the printed materials and texts provided, whereas Fernuniversität students may have to make more choices of reading material.

Most adult education courses are class based and therefore it is not surprising to find that three-in-ten UK liberal adult education, French U3A students and LEA students spend one to two hours a week in a tutorial group. Nearly two-thirds of OU students claim to go to a class in a typical week. This figure seems unrealistically high and it is possible that respondents may have averaged out attendance over a year.

In the main it is Open University students and students in other distance teaching institutions taking courses leading to qualifications who submit written work and sit examinations. A quarter of the older OU students spend two hours a week on tutor marked assignments and a further three-in-ten spend three or four hours a week preparing assessed work. Almost half of those studying with other distance teaching organisations also spend between one to four hours a week on assessed work.

One characteristic of many older learners is that they take a wide ranging interest in their chosen subject and are likely, in addition to a course, to follow up their interests through additional reading, visits, and practical activities and this seems to be true regardless of the course currently being studied.

4.4. STUDY AIDS

From the replies to the question about their main aids to study it is clear that between a third and a half of the respondents in all four countries rely largely upon their own written notes. OU students and West German students make more use of highlighters to bring out key sections in the printed course material. The other significant source of help reported by the UK and German respondents was libraries. Respondents made little use of other technological study aids such as photocopiers, cassette recorders for taking notes, or video recorders for relevant TV programmes. It will be interesting to see what impact the advent of

TABLE 38

Most important aids to study

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK Excl. OU*	*OU*
	%	%	%	%	%
Notes in margins	4	2	3	2	13
Own written notes	32	37	48	36	45
Highlighters, etc.	11	3	5	3	27
Index cards	2	1	2	7.2	2
Cassette recorders	*	2	0	1	1
Audio/video cassettes	0	4	0	2	3
Home computer	*	1	0	1	*
Library	30	2	5	19	4
Photocopier	2	1	0	1	*
Other	13	35	0	3	8

* 0.5% or less

cheap home computing systems will have as an aid to study. More than a third of French students mentioned other aids, presumably those used in language study.

4.5. COPING WITH THE PACE OF STUDY

One of our strongest impressions of older learners, as a group, is that they are highly motivated and determined students. Once a decision to enrol has been made older students usually display a high level of commitment and are willing to find the time needed to do justice to their studies. Most students in all four countries claim to be up to date with their work or only a little behind schedule.

Two thirds of the German and French students say that they are on schedule, and a further 15–20% that they are only a little behind, and the Belgian responses are similar. A very small percentage say that they are behind schedule. There was no reply from 23% of the UK students, presumably because the question was seen as having little relevance to the kind of course which they follow.

Students taking higher level academic courses are most under pressure and 30–40% of the OU students and those in other UK distance education institutions admit to being a little behind. Where there are problems these usually tend to be linked with health and domestic pressures or with the workload rather than with conceptual difficulties.

TABLE 39

Coping with the pace of study

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
	%	%	%	%	%
Usually on schedule	65	64	62	54	53
Usually a little behind	15	20	25	13	21
Usually well behind	4	4	3	4	3
Usually a little ahead	4	4	5	5	10
Usually well ahead	2	1	0	2	3
No reply	8	8	5	23	9

4.6. OUTCOMES

4.6.1. Future Study Intentions

Older learners appear to be highly motivated, committed and hardworking but this image has been built up from student responses to questionnaires. Their commitment and positive approach to study is apparent in their responses to the question about their future study intentions.

TABLE 40

Future study intentions

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK (non OU)*
	%	%	%	%
Similar course	77	30	62	58
Academically more demanding	10	25	0	6
Different / Informal mixtures of styles	5	15	31	18
Definitely no course	1	9	0	2
Don't know / No reply	7	20	6	16

More than half of these older students in all four countries were intending to go on to a further course, some of them at a more demanding level. Fewer than 10% in any country said that they would definitely not take another course. The marked differences in France clearly reflect the fact that the particular group of students who responded to the questionnaire were following language courses in which progress to a higher academic level was assumed. Within the UK responses, there was a notable difference between the students at the distance institutions and the other students; the distance students were considerably less likely to go on to courses at a similar level, and more likely to take more demanding courses or to cease study altogether. Gender differences in future intentions were relatively small, but what differences there were suggested that older women were marginally more positive in their study plans than men.

4.6.2. Assessment

The majority of older learners do not take courses which have an assessment component and therefore it is difficult to test the effectiveness of study strategies against the measurement provided by grades obtained for essays or practical work, or achieved in an examination. Those students who do sit examinations have a fairly traditional approach to revision; they increase their study time and go over their own notes, essays and relevant course materials. Some also attempt to memorise important concepts or facts but, even in those institutions which provide opportunities for tutor contact, very few older students discuss revision strategies with their tutor.

TABLE 41

Main preparation for examinations

	West Germany	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	
				Excl. OU	*Incl. OU*
Base	559	169	61	1418	3672
	%	%	%	%	%
Little or no special preparation	3	0	0	*	1
Go through essays	4	0	0	1	6
Look at old papers	7	0	0	1	10
Re-read course material	32	0	0	2	12
Go through own notes	21	0	43	3	15
Discussions with tutor	1	0	0	*	*
Memorise key facts	4	50	14	1	6
Work out likely topics	1	0	0	*	2
Increase study time	12	0	0	1	5
Other	5	0	0	*	2
No reply	10	50	43	86	38

* 0.5% or less

Excluding the Open University, only 14% of older students in adult education in the UK were taking courses which led to an examination. However it is possible to look at the performance of the OU students and this group is particularly interesting because the system of assessment involves both the continuous assessment of written work submitted during the year and a three-hour examination and, because the performance of older students can be compared with the rest of the OU population.

The course results data show that there is no difference between the over 60s and the under 60s in the overall pass rate for courses; but closer analysis reveals one important difference: older students do slightly better on continuous assessment and slightly worse in the examination. In addition, analysis of course results by age shows that those aged 60–64 are among the most successful of all OU students.

TABLE 42

Academic performance of OU students (1985)

	Pass Continuous Assessment	*Pass Final Examinations*	*Pass Overall*
	%	%	%
Older OU Students	81	66	74
Under-60s OU Students	76	73	73
All OU Students	76	73	74

The good performance of older students on individual courses is not carried over into the rate of graduation. Older students have the second lowest graduation rate for the BA Degree (requiring 6 credits) and the BA Honours Degree (requiring 8 credits). Fewer older students wish to obtain a degree and this may account for a graduation rate of under half (45.6%) but it is also clear that some are unable to complete their degree because of declining health.

TABLE 43

OU graduation rates by age (up to 1986)

	Awarded BA Degree	*Awarded BA Honours Degree*
Age at Start	%	%
Under 25	45.1	9.1
25–34	51.2	10.4
35–44	55.4	12.2
45–60	53.6	12.4
Over 60	45.6	9.7

Base = 101,666 students registered for study

5. Institutional Characteristics and Learning Styles

All the people who completed the questionnaire had in common the fact that they were over 60 and that they were studying something. We know that there are considerable differences in the teaching and learning methods in the different kinds of institution included in the survey. In this chapter we have presented what the replies show about how the students study in the institution which they had chosen.

We have seen how the motivation of the respondents in all four countries is very similar. We have given the data on study methods by country, but here, and in the data by institution, differences appear to be linked to the teaching and learning methods of different kinds of institution rather than to national differences.

An essential feature of many courses is regular attendance at sessions, usually weekly. In the German universities and in the UK university extra-mural departments, and in some Universities of the Third Age, students may follow a course of lectures; there may be some participation in the form of questions and discussion, but the amount of reading and further study is very much up to the student; though it is the teacher or lecturer who determines the structure of the course. Seminars and study groups are a feature of these organisations too, and these normally make more demands on students in preparation, participation, sometimes in writing. In the UK in WEA and extra-mural classes the tutor often

plays a leading role, though traditionally there is negotiation with the students on content and methods; the German university *Gasthörer* who attend seminars find similar methods there. In the U3As, in all countries, seminars or study groups may be more informal, sometimes with a group leader rather than a conventional tutor; but in all these cases the student decides how much work to do outside the sessions and how to organise it. We have seen from the replies how much time students give to their own study and how many cite the use of a library as one of their most important aids to study.

If the students are learning a skill, then the pattern of study is determined by regular attendance at a class, instruction by a tutor and practice. Many respondents from the United Kingdom LEA courses were learning practical skills. In the United Kingdom, French and Belgian U3As this is also the situation of people learning foreign languages; mastery of technical aids in language laboratories is usually necessary too. This pattern of study is reflected in these students' responses on study methods and, as we shall see, in their attitudes to study too.

More highly structured are the distance learning methods in the courses in the United Kingdom Open University and in the Fernuniversität. Both offer courses for qualification and make considerable demands on the students' time. The undergraduate courses offered by the Open University account for well over 90% of older students in higher education. Each course lasts for nine months of the year; students receive specially written course materials (called units) prepared by academic teams, together with television, radio or taped programmes and, where necessary, experiment kits for science or technology; the units present not only academic content but also programmed learning, and students have deadlines for written assignments, which are sent to individual tutors for detailed comment and grading; and every course ends with a three-hour examination. In addition, during each course some provision is made for tutorial sessions, which may be evening meetings, or day schools, for many courses a week-long summer school, and there is always available counselling and consultation by telephone or face to face.

Teaching and learning methods in the West German Fernuniversität, both in the demands made on students and the support which is offered are very similar to those used in the Open University in some respects.

There is rather less precise information about other distance learning courses, though the National Extension College in the United Kingdom is similar to the Open University in that the students receive specially written course materials and send written work to a personal tutor. The learning is structured; but the deadlines are more flexible and students are more free to choose when they do the work; it is in this sense less structured. Even less so are those other correspondence courses which operate mainly by offering guidelines on following a syllabus. They provide individual correspondence tutors, but generally do not create their own course material. Students are left free to make their own programme of work; if a course is for qualification, the deadline imposed is that of the date of the examination.

The responses of the Open University on study methods reflect the pattern of work which their course imposes on them and the amount of time required for it. The total responses for the Federal Republic reflect the comparatively large sample from the Fernuniversität. The questions about examinations were mainly relevant to students in these two institutions.

6. Students' Comments

All the questionnaires we have distributed have included an invitation to the respondents to add any comments they might wish, an invitation which many respondents took up. As a result we have amassed some hundreds of open-ended comments from older students in the various institutions and countries that we examined. These comments provide us with a rich source of qualitative data with which we can both illustrate and elaborate the conclusions drawn from our quantitative data. In this section we make only a brief selection from this

material, grouped into nine themes which seemed to us to occur most frequently amongst them all: the motivation of older students; their enjoyment of study; the historical factors which affected their studies; the particular circumstances of women; the influences of the institutions in which they studied; relationships between older and younger students; anxieties and problems experienced by older learners; comments on memory and concentration; and the consciousness of new horizons opened up by study.

6.1. MOTIVATION

We have seen that many students gave 'keeping the mind active' as one of their main reasons for studying. A German student expressed this in a forthright way:

> I think that studying in old age, with the stimulation to personal creativity, is the *only* way of guarding against the relentlessly threatening and developing lethargy and senility.

A British student developed this same point, and added two of the other commonly expressed reasons for studying—to make up for missed opportunities in the past, and to develop an interest in a particular area:

> I had three reasons for starting, the first of which was a sense of deprivement that the slump of the early 1930's meant unemployment for my father and the end of my hopes for extended full-time education. Second, and more important to me, I was convinced that continued mental exercise was an essential ingredient of good health in retirement. Third, it was a chance to pursue in depth my life interest in history.

6.2. ENJOYMENT OF STUDY

Older people experience the personal rewards of study in exactly the same way as enthusiastic students of any age. For instance, a Belgian student wrote:

> I find study fascinating. It is not a pastime for me—it fulfils a deep interest. It educates one intellectually and morally; it teaches me to think and understand myself, other people, the world . . .

Many older students thought that long life experience actually enhanced the enjoyment of study. A German student wrote:

> The deeper I go into the subject matter the more I realise that I have only scratched the surface and I want to know more and more. Perhaps experience of life and increasing knowledge work together.

Long absence from formal study might offer advantages as well as disadvantages. An English student said:

> Returning to full-time study after a long gap was very difficult, but very stimulating and rewarding—a personal enhancement in every way. I found further challenges and am delighted I can now achieve 'A' status at my time of life. But I feel relaxed about study, as it is my own personal choice and working hard produces results.

Older students might have a fresher approach than younger students:

> I love study and find it a consuming interest: so stimulating that it does not need the extra 'spice' of competition, which can sometimes bring in wrong motives. Probably because of my lack of formal education, I bring a freshness to it, which is not always apparent in better educated people.

Their determination to approach the latter years of life in a positive way could be exhilarating and engrossing. A British Open University student wrote:

> I do not want to depart this life with a lot of half-baked and over-baked ideas in my mind. I must get this sorted out—this extraordinary business of being alive . . . I do the work for my own pleasure and delight, and it is wholly pleasurable and delightful . . . When perhaps I should be losing interest in things, I am doing exactly the opposite. I am making sense of what I learned along the way.

Or in the words of another English student:

> Every topic I have studied tended to involve my life, perhaps dominate it. This has not been a deliberate intention. Everything I saw, heard or did seemed to have some relevance to the subject I was studying.

6.3. HISTORICAL FACTORS

After 60 or more years of life older people are much more aware than younger students of the impact their life-experience has had on their opportunities for education. Older people in Europe in the 1980s had experienced a great variety of distractions during their lives. There were the simple but long-lasting influences of early life:

> When I was 11 years old I was unable to sit for the 'scholarship' because I had a bad dose of mumps. Further education therefore was not possible.

> My mother hadn't much time for higher education. I always wanted to know more.

> My father promised me that I could go to University if I were equal to it (but he died and she could not).

Then there might be cruelly disruptive events later:

> My study was rather interrupted by the need to leave home to escape from persecution.

> There was no question of that (study) in 1935. I only had an elementary education, then it was the depression and I went to work in an underground laundry—under a hotel—for 3d an hour.

> I joined up in 1939 instead of going to University to read engineering.

German students were understandably conscious of historical influences:

> It should be taken into consideration that the over-60s should be seen as the reconstruction generation which, among other things, through longer working hours and less pay, laid the foundations essential for the reconstruction of the Federal Republic without a grant.

> You should look particularly carefully at the life histories of this group of people such as: youth during the world economic crisis, great depression and National Socialism, school leaving, compulsory labour, war service, wounds, Soviet prisoner of war, late release from service, refugee, war casualty, consequent illness, unemployment, and then, instead of the wished-for career, an 'uncongenial occupation' in order to survive. Still I've kept some optimism about life and so now I'll really study.

Many people managed to keep studying in one way or another through all the diversions of a busy life. An English student provides an example:

> I left school in 1939 when the World War started. It was less difficult to study for my Institute of Bankers exam by correspondence courses than by attendance at 'Night School'. Due to bombing, study was sometimes done in an air raid shelter. I took my books with me into the army. When the war was on I served in India where I sat for some exams. On return to civilian life I still studied by correspondence courses to complete the Associate Certificate and Trustee Diploma; as the bank moved me around the use of postal tuition provided a continuity of study method. I have retired and find it easier to study at home and also to look after my wife and five children.

6.4. WOMEN

In addition to the effects of depression, poverty, war and reconstruction experienced by students of both sexes, many of the women who responded to our survey had also suffered from complex and deep-seated social attitudes to education and training for women. We have included two long extracts to stand for many others:

> I am the widow of an honours graduate . . . and the mother of two more . . . and have always envied them their university experience. I became a student nurse at the start of the War, mainly because my father regarded higher education as 'a waste for women'.

> My reasons for deciding to work for a degree were that I had not had the opportunity to do this when I was young, mainly due to the fact that my parents, like many at that time, considered higher education for girls neither necessary nor desirable. I left school after taking School Certificate, and always regretted not having progressed further with my education. In my fifties when my four children were all grown up, I decided to go to evening classes, where I took 'A' levels in French and German. Encouraged by my success, and at my French teacher's suggestion, I then applied to the Open University to study for a degree.

The effects of discrimination could last for may years:

> My mother said in 1933, you can't go to High School, I don't believe in education for GIRLS; she kept on having babies only my two younger brothers went to High School owing to the 1944 education act. One is an architect and one an insurance manager . . . my sisters never went to High School either. I am pleased with women's emancipation. My family were very poor, my father earned 30s a week and there were seven children and no family allowance. We were only taught the three Rs and then you went to Domestic Service at 14 years and go off mother's housekeeping, then you were expected to get married and get a man to keep you and have a lot of children. My mother never told me about sexual relations, or my periods. She never moved out of the village. In fact I never knew much about anything. I can make money go a long way. I can mix well with people, as I'm used to being outside in the world.
>
> I was in a class of originally 35 girls. We were an 'A' class which comprised 4 or 5 'paid for' girls, whose parents were fairly well-to-do, but most of us were scholarship girls, being the top 1 or 2 pupils from primary schools throughout the entire district up to ten miles away. In those days, parents thought they did very well to keep their children (particularly daughters) at school till they were 16 years of age (the statutory school leaving age at the time being 14) . . . Nearly all of us left as soon as we were 16 and found jobs. Perhaps three went on to teacher training colleges (paid-for girls) but nobody as far as I know went to other colleges or universities as full-time students. So I cannot say that our education was interrupted as parents did not intend us to go further; girls were expected to stay at home much longer in those days under their parents' thumbs, and girls did not go into their own flats and of course could not have afforded to do so in any case, and they earned less than men. . . . If we had been born in a later age I am certain that every single one of us would have gone to Colleges.

6.5. INSTITUTIONS

Older people observe the institutions within which they study with keen and critical eyes. As a German student wrote:

> What the university teachers offer is entirely good. The young students are often not at all aware of what a 'gift from heaven' they are being offered.

Older students adapt to a variety of learning environments:

> It is my view that study by correspondence course—provided the written work is well marked and reviewed and there is a facility for getting questions to problems adequately explained and good sets of model answers—is a more efficient way of learning.
>
> I feel the advantages of working at my own speed, of being able to go over the lesson as often as I like and the excellent notes provided, far outweigh the disadvantage of very little personal contact. I have enjoyed the correspondence course very much, and not least for the way it has opened doors to other areas of knowledge. I have often followed up 'leads' beyond the actual requirements of the course.
>
> I enjoy all forms of studying with a *good* tutor. The WEA classes have been excellent and have provided me with a thirst for further knowledge, which I have pursued by myself with books from the library and second-hand shops. I have also enjoyed extra-mural classes with the University and these too have set me questing further knowledge and have improved my appreciation of TV by knowing a little more about architecture and furniture etc.
>
> I found the method of study in the U3A as directed by our first co-ordinator was very efficient. The course was defined and sections of the work allocated to each student. The students then made researches in libraries and institutions and reported back to the class at a set time in the course. Thus all the work was covered, a general view was obtained and some of the work was studied individually in detail. Our present tutor is excellent, but 'lectures' all the time, allowing time for questions and discussion. Although we learn a lot I do not find I am so fully stretched as in the former way of study. Both methods are enjoyable.

But older students can also be blunt in their comments:

> My main criticism of art classes is that they are not structured and students do their own thing and pick up advice when and how it is offered. Nevertheless I have enjoyed it, but regret I have not progressed further. I do feel some tutors are inclined to spend more time with certain students than others.
>
> From what I have experienced so far I can conclude that many lecturers and professors pay too little attention to the interests of older students. They lack a basic grasp of psychology, learning theory and techniques of communication—they are shut up in their discipline as if they were in a drawer. Above all they have a horror of academic older

people; they are afraid of intellectual older people who want to do a doctorate for example. Most of them are not flexible enough to adjust to unorthodox methods. One thing which older people miss is an interdisciplinary approach and this is lacking.

A British student reviewed the complex teaching system of the Open University:

By and large the O.U. system of units for the various courses is about right, although some of the small print in the physics . . . units was a strain on the eyes. I did not find the broadcasts a great deal of help apart from sustaining interest in the subject. I consider that tutorials are a very important part of the course. There is no substitute for eye-to-eye advice from the tutor during tutorials and one can also learn about the subject by listening to other students' problems and on general discussion. More tutorials and less broadcasts would be preferable. I consider the system of continuous assessment with (assignments) to be more preferable to basing everything on an end-of-term exam. (Assignments keep) the pressure up evenly throughout the year and avoid last minute frantic swotting . . . Open University would not be the same without the Summer Schools. They do provide a very good forum where like-minded people can meet, discuss and argue their subjects . . . A lot is learned under pleasant and enjoyable conditions . . . When it came to the acual exams I did find that time was at a big premium during the three hours alloted. As one gets older you do not retain new facts so easily and more time is expended in in trying to sort these out in your mind at the expense of getting on with answering the question.

One German student was particularly critical:

The organisation of distance learning . . . is bad, cumbersome, too dear, too lavish, bureaucratically confused and mechanical. It is not really suitable for studying science. There is a need for better study programmes, study guides and deadlines, tighter control.

Comments like these have raised in our minds the question whether the 'success' or 'failure' of older students in adult education is determined not so much by their own capacities as by the nature of the educational experiences they may be offered.

6.6. INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES

Some commentators on the provision of educational opportunities for older people have anticipated possible problems in intergenerational relationships—those of older students with younger tutors. The German version of our questionnaire in fact included specific questions about relationships with younger students; the older German students are mostly in classes with university students, 18 to early 20s, and as a result, more German older students made comments about relationships with younger students.

I have been struck by the fact that knowledge of history and a grasp of realistic relationships is not very marked in younger students.

Other German students took a more optimistic view:

In studying as an older person I think it is particularly important to get rid of the prejudices which one has developed oneself—and through 'public opinion' too, favourable impressions predominate. Most of the students are hard-working and interested, but there is a lot of anxiety about the future.

My experience with younger men and women students has actually been totally positive. Perhaps in this connection I should point out that I have always been very aware of being a visitor in the activities. I think, as an associate student, that one should avoid wanting to make an impression oneself at the students' expense; for example, let the students have an opportunity to answer questions, not to snatch the best essay subjects from them, but take those which nobody else wants, be friendly and helpful, without being ingratiating, and not insist on bringing in experience which nobody has asked about. Whether older and younger students get on positively well with each other is, in my view, mainly a question of tact, which is particularly important for the older students to show.

English students, nearly all of them following courses in institutions organised for adults of any age, mentioned age-differences (if at all) in a largely positive way, regarding them as a stimulus rather than an impediment to successful study:

I wanted to keep pace with my children and sons and daughters-in-law.

I would like to get a degree for the sake of the family and grand-children. My grand-children call me 'Super Gran' and so I would like to prove that if Grans can do it, then they can.

Or a stimulus of a difference kind:

All my work (for a dissertation) is done in the University library, surrounded by 18–20 year old Social Science dolly-birds, which is good for morale.

The stimulus can be seen as mutual:

As a mature student, the college of education was often frustrating. I arrived on time, having left my house at 7am, after walking the dog. From then on I sat around and waited for students and lecturers. I had little self-esteem when I started—teenage off-spring always being right. I put all I could into it and did well.

I would like to say that I have undertaken non-vocational and vocational study for around 22 years at the same college of further education and have enjoyed it immensely. Staff and students have always been generous with their help and encouragement. Interaction with younger students helps. We older ones see their point of view on varying points of interest which arise, as well as our own and from which, I feel sure, we all benefit.

6.7. DIFFICULTIES

Another issue which commentators have identified as potentially affecting older people undertaking further study is anxiety. We may ask whether older people in adult education in fact experience any more anxiety than people of any age undertaking new and unfamiliar tasks. Certainly our respondents expressed a number of concerns. Only English students mentioned fee levels:

Being a pensioner makes it rather difficult to undertake many of the courses offered, as the cost is too much for many people like myself. Thankfully the principal of the college I attend is understanding and allows me a reduction of the standard fee.

In spite of being retired older students can have many commitments which interfere with their studies:

My time spent with U3A is limited to enable me to have time for my family and holidays and many other interests which hitherto, and prior to my retirement, I have had very limited time to enjoy.

A Belgian Student wrote:

I am a grandmother and I go to courses when I have the time, because I put the family and the children before my personal interests.

Older people are often themselves engaged in caring activities:

I tried an OU course, but had to give it up, because I had my aged mother with me and could not fit it in with caring for her, my other commitments and the course itself.

I have found it difficult to complete this questionnaire right now, as my studies have been interrupted by complete involvement in local charitable work.

Some older students inevitably suffer from illnesses and disabilities:

I am as eager to learn at 74 plus as I was at 50 (or more) years ago. Unfortunately tired eyes—after an hour's work—and numb, white fingers are an enormous hindrance.

The only subject I am studying is Art, because I am very deaf and would be unable to participate in a subject where listening and discussing in a group would be required.

Despite a number of health handicaps (coronary, two cataract operations, one serious intestinal operation) I have taken up studying at a distance. It has helped considerably to prevent me from suffering from severe depression.

I began studying when I was physically still very well, with interruptions (because of travel and so on). I did ten semesters. Unfortunately because of illness (heart, circulation failure operation) in the end I had to cut down the time for lectures and seminars, and yet (in time) I shall take the rest of them.

Some older students were still working—and still studying:

Time in retirement seemed to present no problems—but it did not work out like that. My institute continued to use my services on a part-time basis to teach Personnel Manage-

ment. Like younger students I had then to fit studies around work which includes considerable travel.

Then redundancy in my late fifties led to me to take a job away from home; four nights a week were to be spent in digs in Yorkshire. How was I to occupy myself? The problem was quickly seen as an opportunity, and I enrolled as an (Open University) student.

6.8. COMMENTS ABOUT MEMORY AND CONCENTRATION

The most notorious of all the anxieties of older students is failing memory. As one German student said:

> The question of retention of knowledge is hardly touched on in the questionnaire. The problem for older people is not only that of slow learning, but also that of forgetting.

Some older students are refreshingly frank:

> I also found out that I am not only a slow learner, but have a poor memory and am positively dense in some subjects, and am also lazy, and a poor student.

> I would much enjoy to study more subjects than I do at present but *time* is not on my side in many ways. As one grows older one's retentive capacity is eroded (probably the loss of brain cells which occur in all of us as time passes). Therefore things learnt are often and more frequently just not retained, to my great annoyance I might add . . . however clever one may be one cannot fight anno domini and one has to recognise that there are limitations.

Some thought that their memory had always been poor:

> Poor memory, which has affected me all my life, is easier to cope with now, as I have the time to spend two years on a one-year course, but it sadly limits the number of courses I should like to attempt.

Not everyone was underconfident:

> I am quite amazed at my ability—left school at 13—started to study when widowed seven years ago—seem to have a good memory.

Many thought there were ways of compensating:

> Personally I feel at no disadvantage because of my age. What I lose in less efficient memory for learning lists of facts, I gain in a greater breadth of reading and experience.

> My inability to remember names and events in life as easily as in the past led me to be very apprehensive about the OU exam. In the event my fear was unjustified . . . On the other hand I am more confident in general and this probably balances the deficiencies in age.

6.9. NEW HORIZONS

Having undertaken study in later life and persisted in it in spite of predictable obstacles and anxieties, very many of our respondents were surprised and excited by the successes:

> Needed a complete break on retirement from a career, doing subjects I like and have not been able to do in enough detail before retirement, meeting new friends through new activities and organisations. I realise the necessity of keeping in balance after retirement the three main essentials to well being—physical, mental and social.

> It was only after retirement to the UK and my husband's early death that I was able to take up my studies again. I have found them an enormous pleasure, and have made a new life for myself.

> . . . plenty of shocks, but it was better than I expected. I'd been able to cope with the material and it was nice to find that out . . . I was forced to think far more than I had done and I found out some things about myself that I hadn't known as well.

> It's given me a terrific life which I didn't expect. It's given me knowledge and confidence; I hadn't much of that. I am more equal with other people. It helps to level you up with friends who have been to a university; and it is far harder than a conventional university. I have gained so many wonderful friends and tutors . . .

> To me learning (and teaching) is—and I suspect will be while I continue to breathe—life's primary motivating force.

German women students (from Hagen, Frankfurt and Oldenburg) expressed similar views:

> My hope of experiencing a new phase of life by studying has been amply fulfilled. These years belong to the most interesting ones in my life. I had not thought that I would still be so competent.
>
> Old age or growing old got a new meaning through a variety of interests.
>
> A kind of uncertainty develops after retirement. You keep active by learning later in life and by contact with younger people.

A Brussels student was delighted with her experience:

> I remember so well going to my first course three years ago . . . looking for the lecture room . . . feeling nervous about going in—what sort of reception would we get from the 'young'? In the lecture room—still empty—what a relief to be greeted by a charming student who thought that it was 'great to still want to learn at your age!'.
>
> Later on one of the teachers asked for a volunteer to take notes. I was really touched to find some months later that the printed syllabus included more or less word for word the notes which I had made. So if my memory wasn't so good, I could still be useful. The students realised very quickly that I was typing the notes which I took in courses for which there was no syllabus. I got more and more requests—I was even given stacks of paper for photocopying. The foreign students were particularly pleased. The Japanese woman, for example, who maintained that she had passed the exam 'thanks to the notes'. Or those two Greeks who had to leave during the year to go to Athens University and who telephoned before they caught their plane to ask if they could continue to 'get the notes'. (We have been writing to each other since and I have an invitation to go to Crete).
>
> What contacts were made through the courses. First with the students, then (and really unexpected) with the lecturers! Thanking them for their teaching, even lending them slides or photos of documents. How pleased they were! But isn't the main thing the essential thing, about the university courses the exchanging and sharing of lives and experiences, together with wanting to listen and all the questions from the young . . .

4

Attitudes to Study

1. Introduction

In Chapter 2 and Sections 1–5 of Chapter 3 we have analysed the first part of the questionnaire to give an account of the characteristics and educational experience of our respondents. In the final section of Chapter 3 we used the open-ended comments on the questionnaire to give a richer, but inevitably subjective picture of older students in action. Now in Chapter 4 we draw on Section 3 of the questionnaire on attitudes to study.

The experience of the course being studied is a major influence on student response. But to what extent can comparisons be made between students involved in a very broad range of courses of varying levels and duration in four European countries? We thought that it would be helpful to look at students' underlying attitudes to study and learning strategies. Thus, the second half of the questionnaire looks in more depth at these attitudes. It also seeks to identify any general similarities between older learners who are involved in a diverse range of courses in four European countries.

In 1985, the Open University Older Students Research Group sought to examine whether the Open University students were similar to other older learners in the United Kingdom. One promising approach was that based on the Approaches to Study Inventory.

2. The Approaches to Study Inventory

The Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI) has its origins in the late 1960s, in two large-scale research studies based at the Universities of Aberdeen and Lancaster. Both studies were designed to identify factors associated with success and failure in higher education. As no suitable scales of motivation or study methods were then available in Britain, the initial pool of items was formed from a review of the literature, from discussions with colleagues and students, and from published American scales (Brown and Holtzman, 1966;[1] Finger and Schlesser, 1965;[2] Stern and Pace, 1958[3]). Longitudinal studies were used to compare student characteristics, assessed before entry and during the first year, with subsequent academic performance (Entwistle, Thompson and Wilson, 1974;[4] Entwistle and Wilson, 1977[5]). While this early research served to identify some of the student characteristics associated with academic progress, it did not look at these in relation to pertinent features of the academic context—in particular, methods of teaching and assessment. The responsibility for success or failure was placed exclusively on the student, as if the academic staff and the institutional policies and resources had no bearing on learning outcomes.

Although early work was not designed to examine study processes, nevertheless it did indicate that students of differing personality types might approach studying in contrasting ways. This possibility was explored further by the use of cluster analysis, which identifies students with similar profiles of scores; and of factor analysis, to identify groups of items which were closely interrelated. In this way the initial two dimensions of motivation and study methods were broken down into five sub-scales which paralleled the cluster analyses, but produced two factors associated with poor degree results. The five factors were labelled 'competitive and efficient', 'fear of failure', 'syllabus-free', 'cynical and disenchanted', and 'disorganised and dilatory'. These items formed the first part of

the pool of items used to develop the ASI for the next stage in the research programme. This involved looking at the processes of learning in higher education and considering how these were affected by the institutional environment. A series of studies in Sweden, Britain and Australia (Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle, 1984;[6] Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983;[7] Biggs, 1987[8]) provided the theoretical concepts, categories and principles from which subsequent versions of the ASI were developed. Thus additional items were written which were based on Marton's descriptions of 'deep' and 'surface' processing (Marton, 1976)[9] and on Pask's indications of the varying learning strategies used by 'holists' and 'serialists' (Pask, 1976)[10]. Another set of items was based on the ideas of Miller and Parlett (1974)[11] on 'cue consciousness', as modified by Ramsden (1979)[12] into a more general category of 'strategic approach'—in which the main intention was to obtain the highest possible grades by being alert to cues from lecturers and also by being well organised.

The publication of an article describing results from the second pilot inventory (Entwistle, Hanley and Housell, 1979)[13] aroused considerable interest among other researchers working in this field. As a result, the ASI was used extensively with British undergraduate students (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983)[7], with students at the Australian National University (Watkins, 1982)[14] and in studies at the Open University (Morgan, Gibbs and Taylor, 1980)[15]. Repeated factor analyses of successive versions were carried out, with similar if not identical factor structures being reported, leading to the production of the final research version of the ASI.

It is important to note that one of the problems in developing the ASI through its successive versions was that the main theoretical constructs were evolving during the life of the research programme. In particular, any such review must acknowledge the major contribution of the group of researchers in the Department of Education at Gothenburg University (Marton, 1976;[9] Marton and Säljö, 1984[16]). The Swedish researchers pioneered the systematic description of students' learning experiences and perceptions of the content and context of learning. Their research made others aware that descriptions of the relationship between how a student learns and the quality of learning were missing from most 'explanations' of learning. It challenged notions of evaluating learning only in terms of the quantity of correct responses made, where 'correct' is defined as correspondence between the information presented and the answer given by the learner. It stressed the functional relationship between intention, process and outcome. It said how important it was to understand the study process in relation to both the content and context of learning. These emphases gave enormous impetus to later work.

3. Use of the Approaches to Study Inventory in the Survey

The ASI was used with first-year Open University students studying foundation courses in social science and technology; these were students of ages ranging from 21 to around 80, many of whom had no conventional educational background. It was therefore decided, as the Inventory had been successfully used outside the conventional university context, to include it as part of the Older Students Research Group's second research project, making a few textual changes which were necessary for its use with part-time adult students. The sample for this survey, as has been shown, included a wide range of students and institutions and courses at educational levels from university degree standard to non-academic leisure courses. Respondents were asked to ignore items in the Inventory which did not apply to their type of study, for example items relating to examinations and qualifications. In a few institutions it appears that adequate explanation was not given when the questionnaire was issued; there was some misunderstanding which seems to have led to a lower response rate in these institutions. Overall, however, the response was good.

The ASI seemed free of national bias and after consultation it was agreed that the concepts in it were acceptable to Belgian, French and German students. It was therefore decided to translate it into French and German and to use it in the

international survey. This meant that the composition of the whole questionnaire was the same for students in all four countries. Whatever the reason, it will be noted that only 40% of the French students responded to this part of the questionnaire.

4. Description of the Approaches to Study Inventory.

The Inventory consists of 64 statements about approaches to academic work. Beside each statement are five numbers, and students are asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each statement by choosing the response which best conforms with their view.

The five responses are:

4. Definitely agree
3. Agree with reservations
2. To be used only if the item does not apply to you, or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer
1. Disagree with reservations
0. Definitely disagree

The 64 statements appear in random order in the Inventory, but are grouped into 16 sub-scales for the purpose of analysis. These sub-scales represent the 16 different conceptual characteristics which research has suggested constitute students' approaches to study. The value of the Inventory is that its sub-scales measure differences which appear to have a close relationship with the quality of students' learning.

The sub-scales are detailed below with a brief explanation of their meaning.

Sub-scale	*Meaning*
Deep approach	Active questioning in learning
Inter-relating ideas	Relating to other parts in the course
Use of evidence	Relating evidence to conclusions
Intrinsic motivation	Interest in learning for learning's sake
Surface approach	Preoccupation with memorisation
Syllabus-boundness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks
Fear of failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes
Extrinsic motivation	Interest in courses for the qualifications they offer
Strategic approach	Awareness of implications of academic demands made by staff
Disorganized study methods	Unable to work regularly and effectively
Negative attitudes to studying	Lack of interest and application
Achievement motivation	Competitive and confident
Comprehension learning	Readiness to map out subject area and think divergently
Globetrotting	Over-readiness to jump to conclusions
Operation learning	Emphasis on facts and logical analysis
Improvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details

Most of the sub-scales contain four statements; for example, the four statements of the sub-scale 'deep approach', which is defined as an 'active questioning in learning', are detailed below to illustrate a typical sub-scale.

I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.

I often find myself questioning things I read in books or see or hear on Educational TV or Radio.

I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult.

When I am tackling a new topic I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer.

The scores of each student's responses for each sub-scale were totalled and the mean calculated. These means therefore represent the score of the average student of the population under study. The scores have no absolute meaning as such; the adopted measure of analysis is to compare the mean of each sub-scale with the results of other users of the Inventory.

Table 44 below details the means for each of our groups of respondents.

TABLE 44

ASI Sub-scale means

	BRD	*France*	*Belgium*	*UK*	*UK/OU*	*60% mean*
Base = respondents	559	169	61	1418	2254	
Deep approach	13.0	10.5	11.8	11.5	12.9	9.6
Inter-relating ideas	9.2	9.2	10.8	10.5	11.3	9.6
Use of evidence	8.5	9.8	11.4	10.2	11.0	9.6
Intrinsic motivation	7.3	10.3	12.4	11.4	12.2	9.6
Surface approach	13.0	13.3	12.3	12.4	13.3	14.4
Syllabus-boundness	7.8	7.3	6.7	6.7	7.5	7.2
Fear of failure	5.4	5.8	5.2	4.9	3.8	7.8
Extrinsic motivation	6.8	6.6	4.7	5.1	2.2	9.6
Strategic approach	10.6	9.5	9.5	10.0	11.4	9.6
Disorganised study methods	7.8	7.4	5.7	7.4	5.6	9.6
Negative attitudes to studying	6.4	6.4	5.4	5.5	4.8	9.6
Achievement motivation	9.6	9.0	7.6	8.2	8.6	9.6
Comprehension learning	10.9	8.6	9.9	9.5	8.7	9.6
Globetrotting	7.3	8.1	7.8	8.0	8.2	9.6
Operation learning	9.7	9.8	10.0	10.0	11.2	9.4
Improvidence	5.9	9.0	8.4	8.2	7.4	9.6

As we have said above most of the variables have 4 statements relating to them (though a few have 3, 5 or 6). We take the first item in the list in Table 44 above, 'Deep Approach', as an example. If the scores for each item are summed, then a student using a Deep Approach would be expected to score highly on this sub-scale, possibly scoring as high as 16, the maximum possible, for four items. In contrast a student not using this approach would score much lower.

One researcher (Watkins)[14], has suggested that a measure of support for a variable would be if the calculated mean exceeds 60% of the maximum score. We adopted this idea, and have shown the 60% mean in Table 44 above. So, for example, for Deep Approach the 60% mean is 9.6, which all the figures shown above exceed.

Since the number of statements varies between 3 and 6 the 60% mean method also enables us directly to compare different variables.

Table 44 details the mean data for all the groups of Older European students. In interpreting these figures it is necessary to be cautious because of the large variation in the number of students in the sample, and we have restricted ourselves to a comparative approach rather than considering the absolute figures.

We have mentioned above that the Inventory was derived from studies of younger undergraduate students. Details of the mean scores for several studies with younger students and factor analysis results are given in Appendix 5.

5. Responses to individual items in the Approaches to Study Inventory

Another approach to the Inventory was suggested when we looked at the responses to all the individual items in it and found that in all four countries there were many items to which the percentage responses showed a very great similarity, in expressing either very definite agreement or very definite disagreement with the statement. Although this approach had not been intended by the compilers of the Inventory, we nevertheless thought that it would be interesting to take individual items and treat each as an attitude scale, and then consider the kinds of attitude which appeared to emerge from these responses.

We have not attempted to present here the responses to all 64 items, but have selected for illustration a number of the items to which the response seems to us of particular interest. We found quite a large number of statements with which a high percentage of all respondents were in agreement; we give some examples of these below. Responses to other statements are of interest, because they are more varied—possibly owing to the influence of institutional factors or individual attitudes.

In the figures below we have conflated the responses for 'definitely agree' and 'agree with reservations', and 'definitely disagree' and 'disagree with reservations', and simply show 'agree' and 'disagree'.

The number which follows each statement is the number of that item in the questionnaire (See Appendix 7).

5.1. ATTITUDES TO LEARNING

One striking finding to emerge from the responses to the Inventory questions is the strength of the vote in favour of continuing study. The statement 'I find my studies so interesting I should like to continue with them after I finish this course' brought an overwhelmingly positive response across the board, as can been seen in Figure 7.

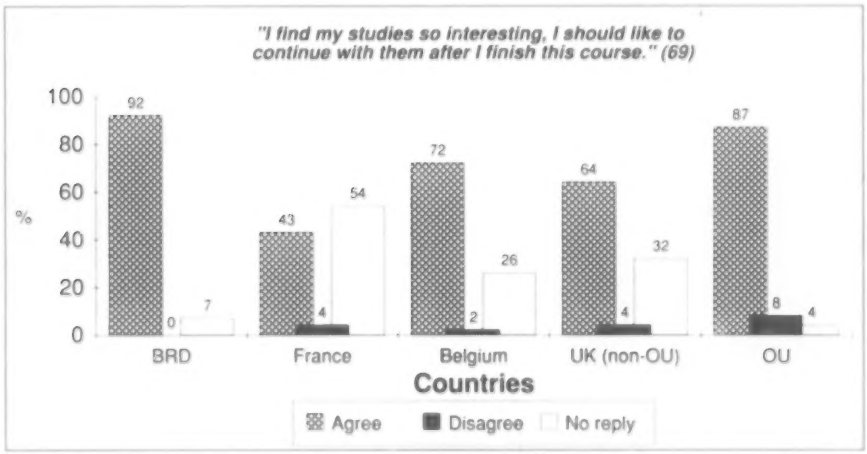


FIGURE 7

The OU students produced the largest percentage of reservations, but even this is not as high as might be expected, given the exacting nature of degree level work.

A further area of marked agreement appeared in the responses to the statement 44: 'My main reason for studying is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me.' The response, as shown in Figure 8, is particularly marked amongst the German, OU and Belgian students.

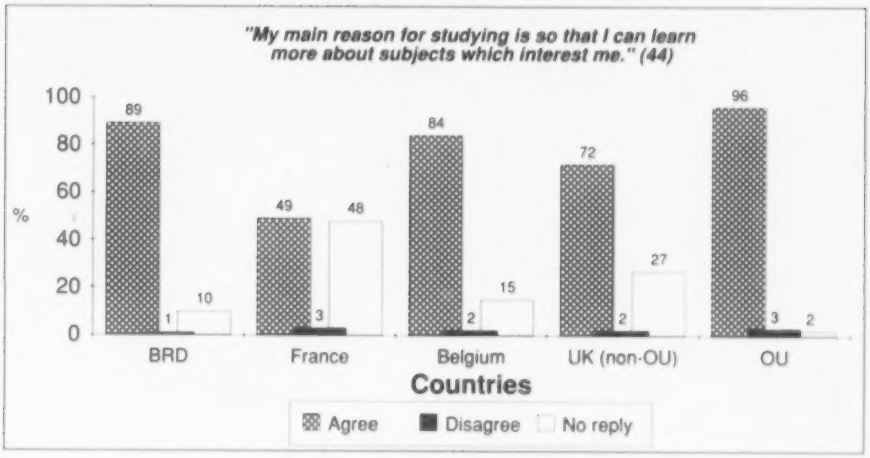


FIGURE 8

The scale of the OU response is probably not surprising, given the kind of commitment students have to make to their studies, but it is almost matched by the German responses, with the Belgians and the non-OU students not far behind.

This suggests that results are not achieved without effort. Some 9 out of 10 German and OU students and 6 out of 10 Belgian and non-OU students are willing to work hard to understand things which seem difficult. This degree of commitment to study is consistent with that noted in Chapter 3, where students appear to devote a considerable amount of time and effort to their work.

The theme is continued in responses to the statement: 'I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.' Here the replies indicate a capacity for conscientious application and suggest that older students see that understanding is as important in learning as memory (see Figure 9).

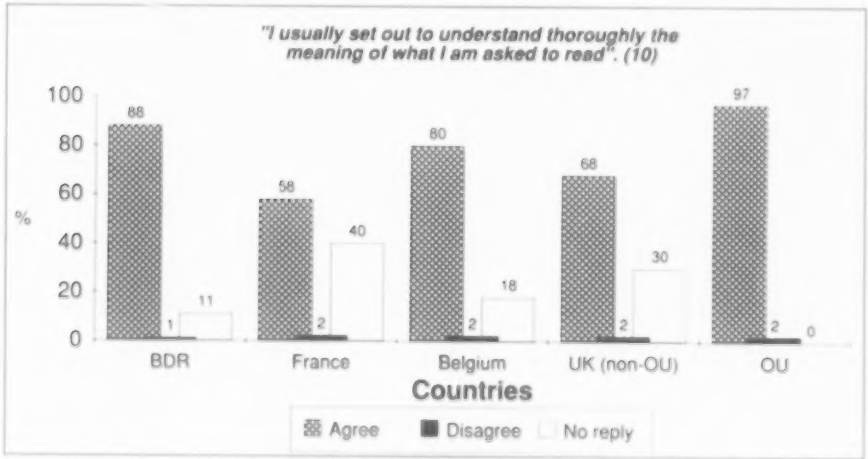


FIGURE 9

There was a high measure of agreement amongst the German, OU and Belgian students, with only slightly less amongst the French and the non-OU students, despite their low response rate.

An equally positive response was forthcoming in answer to the statement: 'I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult' (29).

5.2. SATISFACTION AND PROBLEMS OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

There can be do doubt whatever that for many older students, learning is a voluntary activity from which they feel they gain immense pleasure and satisfaction. Some of the Inventory statements enabled us to pinpoint aspects of their responses which are worth noting.

It was clear that they valued their experience of education and the way in which they found ways to apply it to everyday life, as distinct from a job. The statement 'I often find myself questioning things which I read in books or see or hear on educational TV or radio', which suggested applying learning from one situation to another brought a reaction which was consistent right across the national groupings (Figure 10).

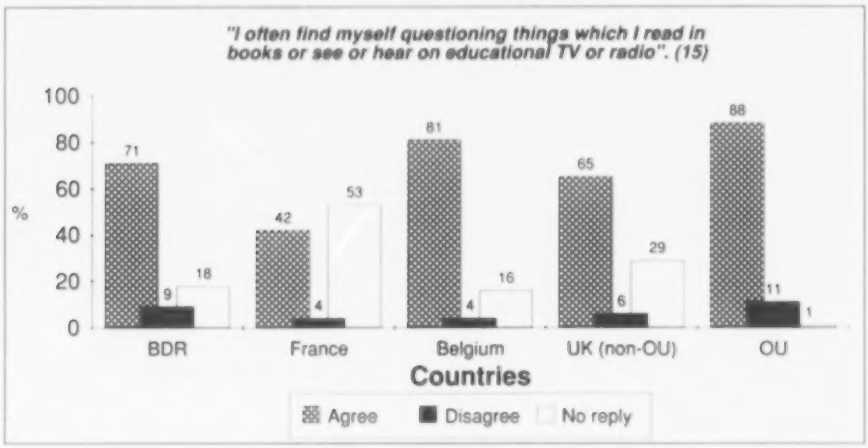


FIGURE 10

Some 7 out of 10 of the Germans, together with 8 out of 10 of the Belgians and almost 9 out of 10 of the OU students agreed, as did 65% of the non-OU students. The figure of 40% for the French has to take account of the equal number who did not respond to the question. Taken together however, it appears that the majority of respondents believe that study does enable them to develop and refine their critical skills.

Further examination of the Inventory responses appeared to indicate a recognisable pattern of agreement amongst older students about their attitudes and approaches to study.

Figures 11 and 12 in particular show that individual styles vary, as might be expected amongst such a large and heterogeneous student population, for

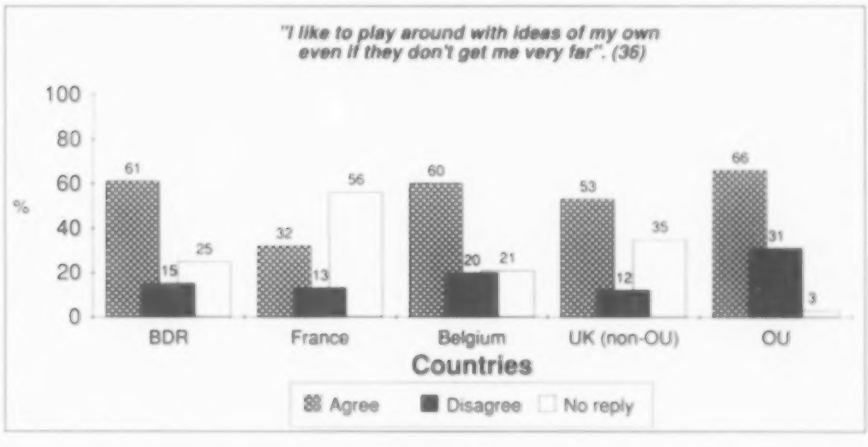


FIGURE 11

example the responses to the statement: 'I like to play around with ideas of my own, even if they don't get me very far' (see Figure 11).

Methods of learning are clearly a matter of individual preference and habit: the replies suggest that with the exception of almost a third of the OU respondents, a significant proportion of students across the board—including the remaining two thirds of the OU respondents—enjoy a sense of innovation in their learning.

At the same time, responses to the statement: 'I prefer to follow well-tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous' showed that older students may be essentially traditional in their learning styles (Figure 12).

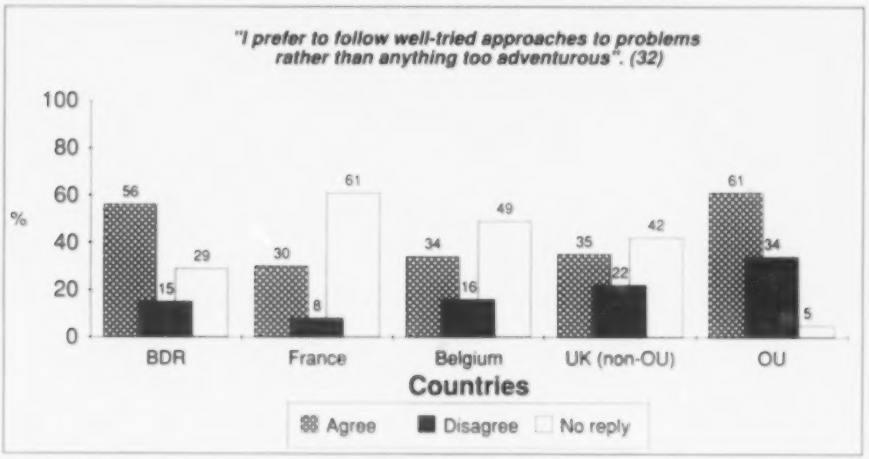


FIGURE 12

Two out of three OU and almost as many (56%) German respondents evidently opted for a more conservative style. This may partly be explained by the particular demands of distance learning. A breakdown shows that between 6 and 7 out of 10 of the respondents by institutions from Hagen and Frankfurt agreed with the statement, a proportion very similar to that of the OU. Of the French, Belgian and non-OU students, the proportion was one third.

5.3. MEMORY

Where study involved remembering information, the responses produced a broad measure of agreement amongst respondents. The statement 'I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn' revealed that although a quarter of the German and almost a third of the OU students

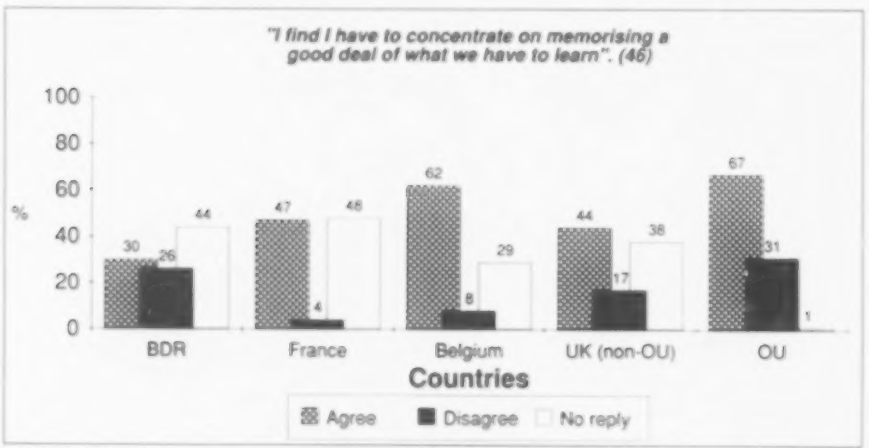


FIGURE 13

disagreed, a significant number of the remainder felt this statement did reflect their view, as Figure 13 shows.

This suggests that nearly a third of the German students, and nearly a half of the French and non-OU students, and about two-thirds of the Belgian and OU students agreed that memorising involved this kind of concentration. The French students were studying languages, where memorising is clearly important, while the OU students and some of the German students had to face examinations. The figure is quite high for Belgian students, who might be thought to be under less pressure.

Further evidence emerges in responses to the statement 'I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the materials presented them' (see Figure 14). The pattern of the German, Belgian and non-OU answers is remarkably consonant, with half of the respondents in each instance concurring with the statement and less than 1 in 5 expressed dissent. The exception is to be found amongst the OU respondents, where agreement is two to one. The 40% of French students who answered this question revealed a 7:1 agreement on this aspect of memory.

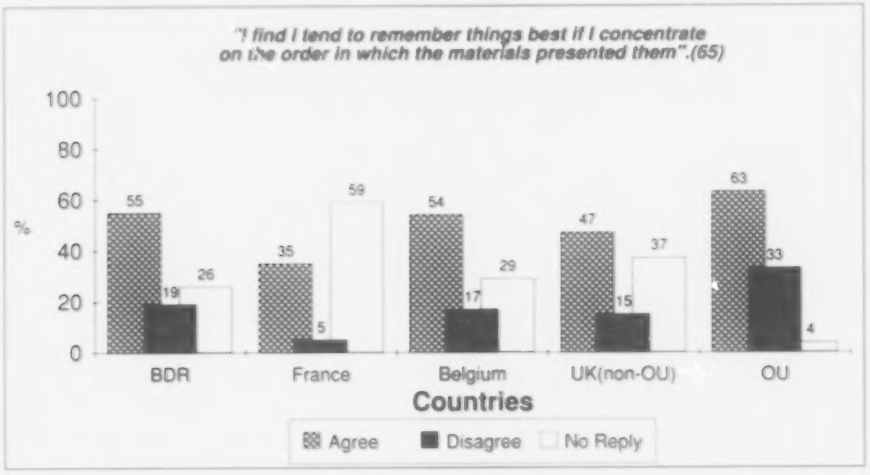


FIGURE 14

5.4. AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT

So far we have concentrated on the areas of agreement on broad issues relating to study. Where responses are varied, some at least of the differences may be accounted for by personality and habit. For example the statement 'having to

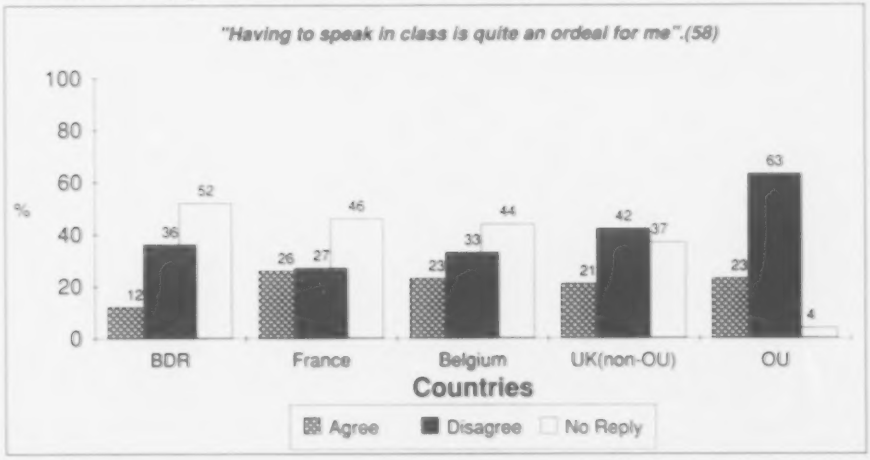


FIGURE 15

speak in class is quite an ordeal for me', might be expected to produce different answers (see Figure 15).

The answers showed a very limited response: only the OU respondents answered this question in any numbers. The two British groups however showed substantial differences, which may reflect institutional patterns. The OU response has to be interpreted in context: tutorial classes are offered, but they are voluntary and indeed some students may never attend one throughout their entire career. The non-OU response reflects the reaction of students whose work is largely undertaken in classes, and shows that of the 63% who responded to this question, two thirds denied that speaking in class was an ordeal.

Another topic which may show individual variation is the response to the statement 'I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters' (Figure 16).

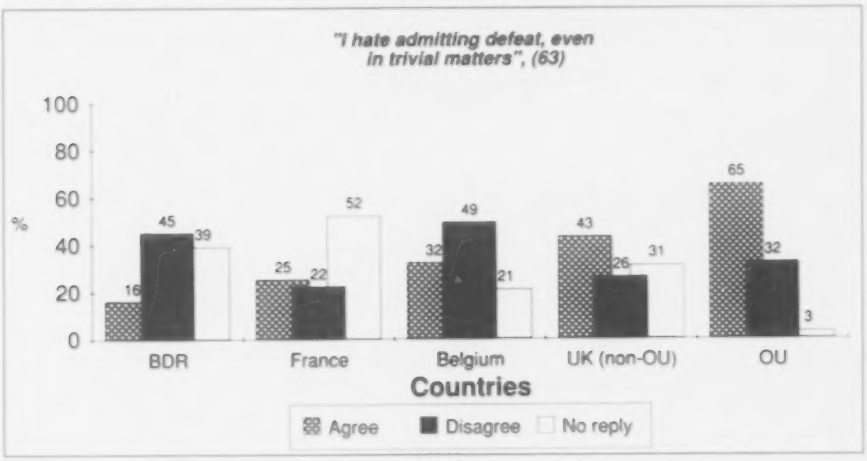


FIGURE 16

Here, the sharpest contrast is between the German and the OU respondents, whose clear response appears within the context of a very high response rate to the question. Other groups show more variation in their replies.

5.5. CONCLUSION

The items selected for inclusion in this section have been chosen to show responses to some of the Inventory statements and the picture it gives of the respondents' attitudes to study. No assumptions are being made in general terms. It is however safe to say that examination of all the tables shows that there are no obvious breakdowns across national groupings. Some similarities can be related to institutional learning methods—for example there are some similarities between the British OU and those German respondents who were studying with the Fernuniversität.

In many ways—not surprisingly—the statements raise more questions than they answer. There are many issues for debate here between students, teachers and policy makers. Perhaps the most significant findings are those which point to the immense satisfaction which respondents say they get from their studies, the amount of effort which they clearly put into them, and the value which they appear to gain as a result.

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5

Summary and Main Conclusions

We began this enquiry by identifying the growing number of older people in Western society, and their potential as students. The study has been based on responses from 4,461 people aged 60 or over in four European countries. We believe it is the most detailed survey of its kind so far made: it thus offers extensive evidence of the characteristics and performance of such students. In this chapter we summarise our main findings from the data we have gathered, and set out the conclusions we draw from them. We show how things appear to be now, and we identify some areas where further enquiry might be rewarding. In the following chapter we set out the inferences to be drawn from the conclusions, look to the future, and suggest lines of policy we believe are indicated.

1 We found striking similarities between the respondents in all four countries, despite national and institutional differences. In consequence we have been able to draw some general conclusions about older students across all four European countries.

The replies to a very detailed questionnaire came from over 4,000 Belgian, English, French and German men and women, who had in common that they were all aged 60 or over, and that they were engaged in some form of study. In the United Kingdom the respondents came from the traditional adult education organisations and the new, large scale and innovative Open University. In the other countries the survey concentrated on innovations: the developing Universities of the Third Age in France and Belgium in the 1970s; and the opening of the universities to older students in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The respondents showed themselves as enthusiastic and dedicated students, competent, and well able to sustain their interest in study.

Most of the respondents were studying in the early stages of retirement, between 60 and 70, though a significant number were continuing into their 70s and 80s. The percentages in their 60s range from 77% in the UK to 80% in Belgium and 81% in France and Germany. Overall 6% were over 75, ranging from 4% in Germany to 7% in Belgium and the UK. Such differences as emerge appear to come from differences in the institutions rather than from the students themselves.

We conclude that the type and range of courses available are a major influence on older students' patterns of study; that nowhere is age alone a bar to those who want to study; and that older students eager to study will make the most of what is in practice available to them. Further investigation of how far what is made available is supply led, and how far demand led, is necessary.

Just over half (51%) of the respondents were women; but differences appeared in the samples. In the German and Belgian institutions the majority of the respondents were men, whereas 57% of the French respondents were women; and two thirds of the respondents from the UK institutions were women, except in the Open University, where men are in the majority. This pattern of response seems to be determined not so much by the country as by the type of course being followed. Men are in a clear majority in courses at university level, and for qualifications, and the reason for this raises an interesting question. Men also remain in a majority in the over-70 age groups, but, in the populations as a whole, women very clearly form a majority. Further enquiry into the motivation which produces this pattern is needed.

A major difference appears in the marital status of the respondents in all four countries, and in all institutions. Over 80% of the men are married, whereas the percentage of married women ranges from 55% in France to only 38% in Germany. This applies to the whole age range, from 60 to over 85,and so cannot be explained, for example, by there being a higher percentage of older widows. In the whole population over age 60 40% are men and 60% women. In any case the percentage of single women who had never married ranges from 17% to 25%. It is possible that unmarried, or unattached, women are freer to take up studies which attract them than are married women.

We believe that further quite sophisticated research is required to throw light upon the participation of older women in adult education.

2 The occupational groups from which the respondents came were very similar in all four countries, and came from a wide range of occupations.

Between 10% and 15% of the respondents described themselves as housewives; between 12% and 18% had been teachers; and between 12% and 21% office workers. Just over a quarter had been in a profession of some kind. Manual and 'blue collar' workers were everywhere poorly represented, despite the fact that most of the institutions represented in the sample had completely open access. Most of the women had been in employment outside the home.

We conclude that studies of the type we have examined have particular attraction for those whose occupations have required the sort of application associated with such studies.

3 There was much similarity in the educational experience of the respondents.

There was a wide range in the respondents' level of education. While nearly 40% of the total had qualifications below, or even well below, requirements for entrance to higher education or training, on the other hand almost 20% had university degrees or equivalent. There was a similarity, too, in educational experience between completion of full-time education and the age of 60; most of these older students had taken advantage of educational and training opportunities during their working lives, despite the eventful history of Western Europe during those decades.

These older students have been, it seems, learners throughout life, and are the sort of people likely to sustain an interest in learning, and adult education, as long as they are able.

4 The respondents in our survey belong to a generation whose lives have been strongly affected by the economic and political troubles of the 1930s, the 1939–45 war and the ensuing difficulties of the post-war years.

From these, not surprisingly, flowed the worst of the impediments and interruptions to their education, as reported by our respondents. In all four countries, but especially in West Germany, the war was the dominant factor for men, but also, even if to a lesser degree, for women. Secondly came lack of money, especially affecting women—though rather less so for the French respondents than for those in the other countries. Noticeably, in all the countries, domestic difficulties did not loom too large, though marriage and having a family expectedly had affected women more than men, and were particularly important factors in Germany and France.

We were impressed by the conclusion that while the external constraints could not be denied, for these older people concerned in learning there was the will to overcome them, as there had been throughout their adult lives.

5 A majority of our respondents had chosen their principal subject of study in the humanities—literature, fine art, music, history, and philosophy—or in foreign languages.

However, among the respondents from Brussels, West Germany and the UK there were numbers of people studying a wide range of subjects. In France the sample was taken almost exclusively from classes of foreign language students, and this obviously biassed the responses from France. In West Germany the sub-

jects chosen were mainly in the humanities, and this choice may reflect a developing interest in reviewing life's experience. In any case it may be said that, for the majority of students who are associate students, up to now science subjects have not been offered in a form which is suitable for them. Of all the respondents, only a small percentage had chosen mathematics, science or technology, and only from the UK did we have responses from people following practical subjects. Here again we have to consider the influence of the opportunities available as well as the direct wishes of the students.

We did, in fact, also collect information about the subjects offered by the institutions from which we took our samples. In the UK the Open University offers mathematics, science and technology courses which do not demand prior qualifications, and which are specially written for adult beginners; and 25% of students over the age of 60 were studying such courses. Elsewhere in the UK, in most of the institutions studied, only a small number of such courses was offered. In France, a wide range of subjects is offered in the Universities of the Third Age, though the range may be influenced by the type of institution in which the UTA was founded. The faculties of the West German universities cover a very wide range, with the exception of the Fernuniversität. Here, as in Brussels, science and mathematics courses are open to those associate students who have the necessary entrance qualifications, but they have not been adapted to suit the needs of those without prior qualifications.

We conclude that this reinforces the view that, while older students who are eager to continue learning will make the most of the opportunities open to them, and may even force themselves through barely open doors, their choice of subject may be much constrained by what is in practice available; at the same time, they do not feel not constrained by a supposed inability to approach certain 'unsuitable' subjects.

6 There was very considerable agreement between the respondents in the four countries about why they were continuing to study after the age of 60.

The most frequently mentioned reasons were the need to keep their minds active, to develop an interest in a particular area, and to achieve personal development. Strikingly, these reasons were in the majority both as the *main* reasons for studying and also among *all* the reasons for doing so. Social and affective objectives, such as meeting new friends or finding a new identity after retirement had relatively low ratings.

It seems clear that these older European students are genuine students, and not just older people looking for an activity to fill in a few hours in the day.

7 Older student respondents, in common with other adult learners, appear to be highly motivated, well organised, hardworking and capable of adapting to the demands of the courses they are following, including recreational and craft classes, informal discussion groups, language classes and academic study up to, and including, undergraduate level.

The majority claim that they can undertake concentrated study for between one and three hours at a time, and most are engaged in some form of study activity on two or three days in a typical week. Most claim to be able to keep up with the course they are studying. Only 20% admit to falling behind, and in the UK 30% to 40% taking degree level courses say that they are normally just a little behind with their studies.

We are convinced that the ability adequately to undertake and carry out concentrated study is a marked characteristic of those older people who do elect to study.

8 Detailed data on the learning abilities of older people as shown by their academic performance are available only in the UK Open University.

Many of the students who took part in the survey were taking general interest courses which were not formally assessed, and also we have no data on the academic performance of the German and Belgian students doing university courses. The image of competence of those older learners must accordingly be

based largely on self-reports. We can, then, look to the UK Open University with particular interest. The students are engaged in demanding undergraduate programmes, and their self-perceptions can be checked against their recorded academic performance, in terms of results on individual courses, overall graduation rates, and drop out, and these can be compared with those of the rest of the OU undergraduate population. This comparison was carried out at three points during the past decade—1982, 1985 and 1988—and revealed no difference in the pass rate on individual courses between older students and the undergraduate body as a whole. Moreover, there is evidence from all four countries of the perseverance of the respondents: a large majority affirm an intention to continue studying beyond their present endeavours.

We conclude that older students who take up academic studies are at least as capable of pursuing them as are their younger peers.

9 Very similar attitudes to study in respondents from all four countries emerge from their response to the Attitudes to Study Inventory.

There is a preference for study based on comprehension and finding relationships, rather than on a mechanical approach. When the results were compared with earlier surveys using the same instrument they revealed no marked differences.

10 Personal comments, not in response to questions, were added by a very large number of respondents.

Our report includes a selection of these, both for their intrinsic interest and to illuminate themes which most often occurred—motivation, enjoyment of study, personal histories and historical factors which affected their studies, the limited opportunities for women of this generation, the experience of institutions and teaching methods, difficulties encountered, comments on memory and concentration, relations with younger students and tutors, and the new horizons opened up by study.

11 The conclusion we reach above all is that our data confirm, convincingly, that, in the field of learning, stereotypes of old age must be dismissed.

Work in many fields in recent years has increasingly projected an image of older people *not* as inevitably facing a period of increasing decline and senility, but as sustaining their intellectual and mental capacities, and putting them to fruitful and rewarding use. This in itself may become a stereotype. For some, sadly, there must be physical, emotional, psychological disabilities, which prevent further work and increase decline; but the fit, active elderly show themselves as capable of real work, often into their 80s and 90s. Eminent people of great age—statesmen, writers, artists, scientists—still doing important work, may rightly be regarded with awe and admiration; we believe they are typical, if in prominent ways, of a great many older people still working and achieving in many other walks of life.

Our findings suggest that, far from depriving younger people of their due, and being a burden on the younger generation, such older people can well be an asset to their society. As a corollary, we suggest that, if those over 60 with the will to do so can still learn, then the same must apply to similar people over 30, 40 and 50. This is significant at a time when the questions of re-education and retraining are of particular importance. The stereotypes are misleading and dangerous, and we maintain that our findings confirm that there are good grounds to dismiss them.

We go on to consider the implications of these conclusions in Chapter 6.

6

Looking to the Future

We move on from the immediate conclusions of our research to discuss future policy for education in Europe. Wherever that policy bears on the needs and interests of older people we suggest areas in which further enquiry is needed. The rapid changes now occurring in Europe emphasise the importance, not only of national policies, but of a greater need for adopting a European approach to the future development of policy and practice in education for adults.

1. A new profile of ageing

National governments within the European Community are already aware of the demographic changes which are leading to an ageing population. A fifth of the population of the European Community is over 60 years of age and this proportion is expected to rise to a quarter by the year 2010. But we are still as yet only in the early stages of developing the policies or planning necessary to address these changes.

There is no historical experience of societies living with large numbers of older adults, and the popular image of old age is one of frailty and dependence. Age is often regarded as a problem, and concern has been expressed about the financial cost to be borne by those still at work.

But this image is superficial. More people are living longer and, equally important, are living longer in good health. Average life expectancy in the European Community increased by almost 10 years between 1950 and 1980 and is likely to increase further given the present emphasis on personal health and environmental improvement. Better nutrition, medical and social services, workplace safety and pollution controls mean that people retire fit in mind and body, with many active years ahead of them.

We need therefore a new view of retirement and old age. Our survey has shown that fit, active, elderly people can continue vigorous mental and often physical activity well beyond 60; many have some 20 years of active life before them; they are the so-called 'younger old' and not the 'older old' who may be less active and in need of care. The generation to which our respondents belong is better educated than in the past, highly motivated, capable of learning and of participating in society.[1]

2. Active participation

The main reasons for studying given by a large number of our respondents were to keep their minds active, pursue an interest in a particular subject and to continue their personal development. The evidence given in our report shows how they are doing this. There are, or appear to be, some differences between people in their 60s and those in their late seventies. In all four countries the percentage of respondents over 75 is small, but then they already belong to an older generation, in which fewer were privileged in their conditions of life and opportunities. The numbers of active people over 75 may well increase. But the view that continuing activity prolongs the capacity for activity, and, in a sense, postpones old age, is supported by the findings of our report. In an extra section, included only in the German questionnaire,[2] respondents were asked to say what effect univer-

sity study had on their health; two-thirds replied that it had been positively good. This of course was a subjective view. In a recent longitudinal study, by Ursula Lehr,[3] of older women, a correlation was found between longevity and a feeling of being in good health, even when not supported by medical opinion. An increasing number of studies in this field support the view that continuing activity is positively related to continuing good health.[4]

Our work was concerned with actual study, but we are aware that the range of older people's interests is very wide. Many older students are active in other ways too: there is evidence of this to be found in many of the respondents' comments. More specific evidence is given in the report *Older students in the Open University* (1984),[5] that older students maintained an interest in leisure, culture, social work, church, sport or political activities, while studying for a degree. Further systematic study is needed of the whole range of activities undertaken by older people.

It is in our view not only that activity, as such, contributes to a healthy and satisfying old age, but that these activities give a structure and sense of purpose to life for those people who may otherwise lose a well-defined social role at retirement age.

3. Access to adult education for older students

We have shown in detail in Chapter 1 that the term 'adult education' means different things in different countries. In this section we are considering those opportunities for education available to adults (those over 18 and including people aged 60 or over) in a wide range of provision, from universities to informal leisure activities.

3.1. SOME NATIONAL DIFFERENCES

There are some differences in provision and access to education for older adults in the four countries studied.

In the United Kingdom age is no barrier to access since almost all forms of adult education are open to all. The normal age of students in the Open University, other distance teaching bodies, liberal adult education and local authority institutions is from around 18 to the 80s. The one exception in our survey was London University, where entrance (not age) qualifications were required for many courses. Other British universities have varying requirements for entry for mature students,but impose no age limit. For adult students access is more limited by factors which are not mainly related to age, such as availability of courses, location and costs. Cost is a particularly significant fact in the UK, which has the lowest pension rates and the highest proportion of poor older people in the Community.[6]

In France and Belgium the Universities of the Third Age were created specifically for older people, and in fact provide opportunities which were often not generally available in adult education. Because of this there has been a development in the opposite direction, in that some Universities of the Third Age have widened into Inter-Age Universities which attract younger students; though older students still seem to make up the majority in many of these. The only problem of access here is in the location of the Universities of the Third Age, a problem which for some people is partly solved by the creation of smaller, more local satellite groups. And there are of course limitations in the range of subjects which can be covered. The situation in Belgium is broadly similar to that in France, though the respondents in our survey came mainly from those students who were using the opportunity offered to attend faculty courses in the university, and in this case their own educational background determined to some extent the range of courses which they felt qualified to take—formally or otherwise.

The German respondents were in a different position. In the *Volkshochschulen* (which were not included in our survey because of lack of resources), as in the United Kingdom, adult education has long been open to students of all ages. The

respondents to our survey were people interested in academic study, who had taken advantage of the opportunity to study in a university. They were offered the alternatives of enrolling as fully matriculated students, if they had the necessary qualifications, or of being associate students (*Gasthörer*). Access to university courses is mostly unrestricted for associate students, and so they can choose a wide variety of subjects. However, associate students cannot get a degree. It is interesting to observe that older students who start as associate students may wish to progress to study for qualifications, and that more flexibility in entrance requirements for this age group would make such further access easier.

3.2. INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

Everywhere lack of formal academic qualifications can exclude adults from some courses. The qualifications demanded of younger students may not be appropriate for mature students. But life experience and evidence of study can be recognised as acceptable qualifications, as is the case in many areas of the United States, and increasingly, if slowly, in the United Kingdom. There is strong support for this approach in the undoubted success of so many older students in the Open University, where no formal qualifications of any kind are required for entry to the degree programme. In the European context, definitions of 'student', as used in the programmes and proposals of the Erasmus Bureau, should, in our view, include older students.

Another factor which may limit access for adults is the location and timing of courses, particularly for older students with family commitments or lack of transport.

Organisation and regulations within an institution may also cause problems of access: such factors as the number of places available, even the number of seats available in lecture and seminar rooms, can cause problems when older students join established courses. Those who do not fit into accepted categories may be discouraged by the feeling that they are unwelcome. We suggest that more flexibility and re-planning could remove many barriers of this kind.

Another limiting factor is that the choice of courses for adult students may be limited by lack of information or advice. Comments from some of our respondents show that they were following their course because they knew of its existence, rather than because it was their first choice of subject. There seems often to be no information service which gives advice about all the opportunities which are available in a given area—and a lack of communication between institutions, to which entrants may well look for alternative programmes of study. The insularity of some institutions might be re-examined with a critical eye.

3.3. ACCESS RELATED TO PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In our survey we analysed the data for all respondents, and then looked at men and women separately. In society as a whole it seems likely that women suffer more than men from both ageist and sexist attitudes. Overall they have lower qualifications, lower occupational status, lower incomes and, particularly since most women live longer than men, are more in danger of isolation in old age. However, they do participate in adult education. In the United Kingdom adult education institutions, in the German *Volkshochschulen*, and in the French and Belgian Universities of the Third Age, women form a clear majority in the student body. The percentage of women respondents in the institutions which we studied reflects this ratio. The percentage of women students is the same in all age groups, and so older women are not exceptional in this respect. In universities in the Federal Republic and in Brussels we find older women in the majority among the older associate students; and this is also true of younger age groups, as a study of women of 46 to 60 in the University of Oldenburg shows.[7] But in degree programmes (whether face-to-face or at a distance) the national statistics in all four countries show that male students are in the majority and we found this to be the case with our respondents too. This seems to suggest that women, as far as more advanced education is concerned, are still relatively underprivileged, restricted by their social and economic status and by traditional

attitudes. We suggest that this situation could be explored further in a project which might investigate access to education for under-privileged women, and especially older women.

But, looking to the future, it may be that this situation is already changing, and will continue to change for coming generations. It is interesting already to note that,since our survey was made, the number of women enrolled in the Open University has risen for the first time to 50%.

At the same time we need also to consider how far older men may be under-privileged in adult education. We have found men in the majority in structured courses at degree level; but men are underrepresented in adult education *as a whole* in that they form no more than a third of the total student body. This raises some intriguing questions: is it merely that men find activities other than study in retirement? or have they already sufficient interests? or are there other factors to consider? is this phase of life satisfying for men? It may simply be that the life style and interests of the age group we have studied differ from those of younger generations. These issues have implications for preparation for retirement. At present we have inadequate answers to such questions, which deserve further study.

The cost of study as mentioned above is another factor which may discourage older people from continuing their education, or cause them some hardship. More women in particular are likely to have financial problems, but we think that any concessions on fees should be made on the basis of students' incomes, irrespective of their gender, and in recognition of the fact that the old have a right to education.

As our respondents' comments have shown, individuals may be affected in differing degrees by stereotyped attitudes and prejudices. Older students who are diffident or conscious of a lack of formal educational background, can be particularly discouraged by ageist attitudes, by assumptions that older students as such are inferior as learners. On the other hand some of the respondents have shown that they are well aware of the need for understanding, on their part, of the rigid views held by some administrators, teachers and fellow students, and of the need for tact in dealing with them.

4. Adult education and older learners

Our general conclusion is firm: no special provision is needed for older students on the grounds of their age. What is needed is improvement in education for adults, and from this older students will benefit. Our considerations have been stimulated by the lively, enquiring attitudes of our respondents,and the wide diversity of their interests. They are indeed diverse as individuals; so special courses planned for older people may deal with practical questions which concern their age group, but seldom cater for their wider educational needs.

4.1. PROGRAMMES AND COURSES

The main need, as we see it, is for improved provision in adult education of all kinds: traditional programmes cater well for some interests; innovations are welcome, and more are necessary; more flexibility is required in provision so that it is responsive to students' demands, and does not simply reflect the traditional organisation of the institution. In this rethinking the more open-minded views of the older students can make a positive contribution. As a result of their long experience of life many have an interdisciplinary approach. They often welcome activity based courses with maximum student participation (for instance in archaeology, regional and local history courses) which link theory and practice and research; language courses linked to travel; and courses which are topic orientated as well as those which are based on academic disciplines.

The paternalistic approach (often of younger administrators) tends to be restrictive in such matters. We have looked at the respondents' choices and also the programmes of the institutions in which they were studying, and we are impressed by those institutions which do have a flexible and innovative approach.

There are examples of older people's role in programme planning being used effectively. In the Université Inter-Ages of Nantes there is a student programme planning committee; in the United Kingdom, the Workers' Educational Association traditionally consults students' wishes in its programme; and this is the case in most Universities of the Third Age. These are welcome developments in the whole field on continuing education.

5. Teaching and learning methods in education for adults

5.1. TRADITIONAL METHODS

There is evidence in the programmes of the institutions which we studied that the traditional lecture method is used in many institutions and organisations, which may sometimes provide a stimulating experience, but is seldom conducive to active learning. We know from our respondents that they were using active learning methods, both in formal situations and in private study, but many were also using traditional study methods when they were adapting to the demands of traditional courses.

5.2. ACTIVE LEARNING AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Our most detailed evidence of older students in action comes from the Open University, which does demand a very active response from its students. The courses are programmed, set long-term and short-term goals, and include frequent exercises, regular deadlines for written assignments, and examinations. Evidence of the effectiveness of these methods comes from students of all ages: Responses from older students illustrate how well they adapt to these methods. This is shown by the time they spend at work, their organised study methods, in the low drop-out rate, their good performance and their declared intention to continue studying.

The Open University is of course a distance learning institution. In some distance learning institutions there can sometimes be problems, as varying reports from respondents in the Fernuniversität, London University (External), and the National Extension College show. The students' positive response to such difficulties is shown in the time which they spend on study and in organising their work. Student satisfaction was higher, as revealed in their comments, in those areas where they reported good tutor contact and good administrative support, and was poor where contact with tutors was minimal and where bureaucracy was intrusive or inefficient.

5.3. FACILITATING ACCESS TO COURSES OF STUDY

Older students have similar needs to those of any age in preparing to be effective students. Our respondents' backgrounds were diverse: those who were academically qualified, those with modest qualifications, but perhaps with long experience as learners in adult education, or those who were unqualified, and had little experience of study. In the case of entry to academic courses, in differing degrees, but especially for people with little recent experience of study, preparatory or access courses are needed, such as 'return to study' courses, introductions to study methods, or special refresher courses for entry to higher level courses.

As well as formal provision, support groups of older students themselves may be very helpful. Older and retired people may feel they lack a defined role in society, and peer group communication and group solidarity may help to provide this. The self-help groups and special interest groups of the Universities of the Third Age fill this need.[8] Mutual support groups of older students may also form a mechanism for representing the special interests of older people, particularly in institutions where ageist attitudes have an inhibiting effect on their progress. However, it is important that special groups or classes should not become educational ghettos, provoking by their very existence the ageism they seek to combat.

The role of older people as learners cannot be considered solely in the context of formal education. We recognise the need for the development of enquiries into areas beyond the scope of this report: in medicine, in educational gerontology, research into physical ageing, in the further study of social roles in an ageing population. There is great value in the links to be made between practice and research, and in the contribution older students' experience can make to such enquiries.

6. Intergenerational issues

Questions about the relations of older students with younger students and teachers were included only in the German questionnaire. Our information on this has therefore been taken mainly from informal comments made by respondents from all four countries.

In the United Kingdom mixed age groups, with the widest possible age range, have been normal in liberal adult education and in local education authority educational institutions for some 90 years. Age difference is seldom an issue and rarely a subject for comment or concern. It is not an issue in higher education in the United Kingdom, because few older students enter conventional universities. An estimated 90% or more older students in higher education are in the Open University, where the age range is from 18 to 90.

Our respondents in the Federal Republic and Brussels were in a different situation. Here a lack of structured goals and sometimes, perhaps, a different approach to the process of study, does seem to provoke among some younger students and lecturers hostile reactions, ageist attitudes, and a view that older people are not serious students. Problems may also arise from personality differences at an individual level between teachers and students. It is obviously important that teachers should treat all their students not as stereotypes of an age group, but as individuals with particular needs. Amongst the open-ended comments of respondents there were, as well as some evidence of friction, also enthusiastic accounts of excellent relationships between older people and their younger colleagues.

7. Changing concepts of retirement

The age of retirement now varies more than it has done in the past and there is a chance that it will become more flexible, and in a sense be a less dramatic change in people's lives than formerly. Nevertheless, for many the actual process of retirement from full-time work will be longer than it has been.

Our survey suggests that the preparation for retirement should consist of more than short preparatory courses on managing finances, pensions and so on, and be concerned with long-term planning for this phase of life. This reinforces the concept of life-long learning. It is almost certain that only a minority of the elderly will want to be students, but the evidence suggests that all will benefit from being *learners* in any field, continuing to develop, and having a satisfying retirement, and in that way changing the status and nature of retirement.

Labour shortages, especially among younger workers, may also lead to a more flexible approach to retirement. Whilst many people may be happy to retire from work at the earliest moment, others may want to continue beyond normal retirement age. A fixed retirement age may be replaced by a variety of retirement patterns: indeed the option to retire at some negotiated age even as low as 50 is increasingly being given and this often means more a change of direction and intensity in the use of talents and skills than a withdrawal from the economic life of the country.

The similarity in background and attitudes of our respondents from four Western European countries suggests that a European ruling on retirement patterns would not only be possible, but would be desirable.

8. Positive contributions

In the economic field the evidence of the capacity for learning, and the staying power of people aged 60 or over, suggests that they can continue to make an important contribution;[9] furthermore, they can offer experience and skills which are needed and are currently under-used. In the changed balance of population there is a potential resource here in a time of shortage of skills.

Older people already make a significant, unpaid contribution to community life through local societies, voluntary groups, political, cultural and religious organisations, pressure groups of many kinds.[10] The change in life expectancy means that the active elderly are playing a considerable part as carers of others (and in the process relieving the burden on social services).

Returning to education we believe that the positive, independent and forward looking approach of many older people, as exemplified by our respondents, can contribute to diversity and experiment. They are relatively free to question traditional approaches to study, and on other issues are not bound by the horizons of the workplace, which may well be narrow or antagonistic to flexibility. We think that older students will be a radical, and not conservative, influence in the educational scene of the next two decades.

It is in the light of this that we see a strong need for more communication and co-operation between institutions and between countries. Our investigation of one section of the population, namely students, has already widened the horizons of those who have conducted the enquiry and shown the potentialities for fruitful international cross-fertilisation.

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Recommendations

We recommend that individuals and institutions should:

- Confront ageism in education provision and policy.
- Encourage development of more educational opportunities for older learners within the context of all opportunities open to adults.
- Develop European contacts for older learners in order to promote:
  —awareness of an age group identity at a European level;
  —greater awareness of their common cultural heritage;
  —pooling of practical experience in the adult education field;
  —common research on adult education issues;
  —individual and institutional exchanges.
- Facilitate access to adult education by removing barriers through:
  —abolition of formal entry qualifications for mature students;
  —fee concessions for students with low income;
  —increased promotion and publicity for programmes available at a European level.
- Harmonize provision for flexibility regarding retirement dates and employment possibilities, which make use of the capacities of older people.
- Review the field of continuing education in relation to preparation for retirement.
- Provide funding for further research into the field of education for older students in Europe.
- Encourage commitment on the part of institutions to review and revise educational policies and practices for adults.
- Develop communication and co-operation between institutions so that older learners can select courses according to personal motivation and interests rather than to the nature of a particular institution.

Appendix 1

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Southend Adult Education Centre
Leigh Community College
Lancashire College of Adult Education
Blackburn College of Arts and Technology
Whalley Adult Education Centre
Accrington & Rossendale College of Further Education
Alston Hall Adult Education Institute
Leicester College of Adult Education
Charles Keene College of Further Education
New Parks Community Centre
Crown Hills Community College
Mundella Community College
Judgemeadow Community College
County Council Education Department, Essex
North Essex Area Office for Community Education
South East Essex Area Office for Community Education
Further and Community Education Department, Leicestershire
Youth and Community Department, Lancashire County Council

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TABLE 45

Age, Sex and Marital Status

	UK Non-OU		*OU*		*All UK*		*West Germany*		*France*		*Belgium*		*Europe excluding UK*		*Europe + UK Non-OU*		*Europe including All UK*	
Base =	1418		2254		3672		559		169		61		789		2207		4461	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
AGE																		
60–64	477	34	1160	51	1637	44	235	42	68	40	30	49	333	42	810	37	1970	44
65–69	488	34	715	32	1203	33	220	39	69	41	19	31	308	39	796	36	1511	34
70–74	299	21	291	13	590	16	73	13	24	14	8	13	105	13	404	18	695	16
75-89	154	11	88	4	242	7	28	5	8	5	4	7	40	50	194	9	282	6
no reply							3	*					3	*			3	*
SEX																		
Male	486	34	1240	55	1726	47	357	64	73	43	33	54	463	59	949	43	2189	49
Female	932	66	1014	45	1946	53	199	36	96	57	28	46	323	41	1255	57	2269	51
no reply							3	*					3	*			3	*
MARITAL STATUS																		
Single	219	16	225	10	444	12	59	11	16	10	9	15	84	11	303	14	528	12
Married	811	57	1240	55	2051	56	389	70	121	72	39	64	549	70	1360	62	2600	58
Other	388	27	789	35	1177	32	101	18	32	19	12	20	145	18	533	24	1322	30
no reply							10	2			1	2	11	1	11	*	11	*

Percentages are rounded to nearest 1%.

* 0.5% or less.

Comment: The breakdown by age-cohorts is closely comparable in all four countries. The percentage of older students in their 60s ranges only from 77% in Britain to 82% in West Germany; those of students aged 75 and over from 4% in West Germany to 7% in Belgium and the UK. The percentage of male older students is highest in West Germany (64%) and Belgium (54%), but somewhat lower in France (43%) and the UK (47%). In marital status, France (72% married people), West Germany (70%) and Belgium (64%) are similar; it is Britain (56% married, but 32% reported as 'other') which appears distinct.

TABLE 46

Highest educational level

	UK Non-OU	*OU*	*All UK*	*West Germany*	*France*	*Belgium*	*Europe excluding UK*	*Europe + UK Non-OU*	*Europe including All UK*
Base =	1418	2254	3672	559	169	61	789	2207	4461
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. No formal qualification / *aucun diplôme / keine formale Qualifikation*	28	15	21	0	5	0	1	18	16
2. RSA / CSE / *Certificat d'études / Volksschulabschluss*	3	3	3	5	8	0	6	4	4
3. CSE1 / GCE O / *BEPC / Mittlere Reife*	12	23	19	10	14	7	10	10	18
4. GCE A / *Baccalauréat / Abitur*	10	12	12	24	19	15	22	15	14
5. ONC / OND / *BTS / DUT / Abschluss einer hoheren Handelsschule*	1	3	2	2	9	8	5	2	2
6. HNC / HND / *Diplôme professionel du 1er cycle / Fachschulabschluss*	3	6	5	10	8	13	10	5	7
7. Teaching certificate / *École Normale / Abschluss an einem pädagogischen Institut*	12	12	12	8	1	21	6	10	11
8. University diploma / *DEUG ou 1er cycle universitaire / Abschluss einer Fachhochschule*	6	8	7	9	4	3	8	7	7
9. University degree / *Licence ou Maîtrise universitaire / Diplom / Examen / Magister*	17	11	13	19	15	10	18	17	14
10. Postgraduate / *3ème cycle universitaire / Promotion / Habilitation*	6	1	3	13	15	18	12	8	5
no reply	3	4	5	*	1	5	1	1	1

* 0.5% or less.

Comment: Care must be excercised in making comparisons because of the differing sizes of the national groups, and in particular the large size of the UK group. But it is evident that older students are everywhere drawn from a very wide range of backgrounds. Some 20% of students across the four countries have very modest qualifications, while at the other end of the scale 20% have graduate or postgraduate quaiifications. The UK institutions are unusual in having 20% of students with no formal qualifications at all.

TABLE 47

Occupation on retirement

	UK Non-OU	*OU*	*All UK*	*West Germany*	*France*	*Belgium*	*Europe excluding UK*	*Europe + UK Non-OU*	*Europe including All UK*
Base =	1418	2254	3672	559	169	61	789	2207	4461
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Full-time housewife / 2. Housewife with part-time work	10	15	13	11	10	0	10	10	13
3. Armed forces	*	*	*	1	1	0	1	*	*
4. Adminstration and managers	9	8	8	11	16	16	12	10	9
5. Primary / 6. Secondary / 7. Higher education / 8. Other Teachers	19	10	13	18	12	15	16	18	14
9. Medical	6	7	7	8	8	15	8	7	7
10. Social Welfare	3	*	1	1	1	0	1	2	1
11. Other professions and arts	10	3	6	10	6	3	9	10	7
12. Scientists and engineers	3	4	3	6	5	10	6	4	4
13. Technical personnel	1	4	3	4	5	8	4	2	3
14. Electrical, skilled trades	2	1	1	0	1	0	*	1	1
15. Farming, manufacturing	3	1	2	4	1	0	3	3	2
16. Communications / transport	2	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	1
17. Clerical and office	22	8	13	12	18	21	14	15	11
18. Sales and services	8	3	4	10	6	5	9	8	5
19. Unemployed / retired	3	34	—	*	4	0	1	—	—

* 0.5% or less.

Comment: The figures are distorted because in the Open University's original 1985 survey 34% of the students gave 'retired' as their occupation. The distortion can be presumed to have particularly affected the data for teachers and professional workers. Nevertheless we can see broad similarities throughout the four countries: housewives, teachers and clerical workers form the largest groups of older students, while few students in any country come from manual occupations. The table therefore omits figures for 'retired' under the *All UK* and total *Europe* columns.

Appendix 5

Approaches to Study Inventory

Examination of the two tables of data (Table 44 and Table 48) shows considerable agreement between the data which reinforces not only the validity of the use of the Inventory with older students, but also suggests there is a broad universality of learning styles among students of very different ages and socio-economic backgrounds.

For example, if we consider the figures for Deep Approach—the older students' figures lie within the range 10.5–13.0, and those of the younger students lie within the range 10.6–12.2. The 60% mean is 9.6. This is to be welcomed, since a Deep Approach is a strongly desirable approach to study.

The contrasting approach to Deep Approach is Surface Approach and the older students' figures are in the range 12.2–13.3 and those of the younger students in the range 12.3–14.8. The 60% mean is 14.4 and in this case, since Surface Approach is a less desirable mode of study we should hope to find the means below the 60% level. They generally are for both groups of students.

Similar comparisons can be made for the remaining 14 variables and there is a remarkable similarity for most of the variables between the older and younger students.

One variable where the data do however differ concerns Extrinsic Motivation. The data for the younger students, for many of whom studies are linked to vocational aspirations, are in the lower range of 5.9–8.4, whereas the data for older students, with little vocational incentive, are in the range 2.2–6.8. This is what we would have expected, given that the majority of older students are studying Arts and languages courses and are predominantly retired.

The picture that emerges agrees with and confirms our other data from the questionnaire. Older students are serious, hardworking and use similar study methods to those of younger students.

Analysis of the Inventory: Factor Analysis

As we said above the statistical technique of factor analysis was applied to our data.

The method seeks the minimum number of factors that can be considered to underlie a set of variables and the strength of the relationship between each variable and each factor.

Our data are reported in Table 49. A four-factor solution was produced and the strength of the relationship (the loading) between the 16 variables and the individual factors is given in the table. Loadings may vary between -1 and +1; those below 0.3 are not shown.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the data:

1. A four-factor analysis best fits the data—in common with all previous studies.
2. Two factors (I) and (II) are clearly distinguishable and account for most of the explained variance.
3. Factor (I) from the work of other researchers is interpreted as representing an underlying academic style of learning. This can be seen in that it correlates with variables such as Deep Approach, Relating Ideas, Use of Evidence and Intrinsic Motivation.

Our results parallel those of other researchers and taken with the mean data reinforce our conclusions described above of the great similarity between the approach to study of our older students with their younger peers.

TABLE 48

ASI sub-scale means for younger university students

	Australian Distance	*Australian Conventional*	*Australian Conventional*	*UK Conventional*	*60% Mean*
base =	431	348	540	2208	
Deep approach	12.2	11.0	11.3	10.6	9.6
Inter-relating ideas	11.5	10.8	10.7	10.1	9.6
Use of evidence	11.0	9.9	9.8	9.6	9.6
Intrinsic motivation	9.6	8.5	9.5	8.3	9.6
Surface approach	13.9	14.8	12.3	13.1	14.4
Syllabus-boundness	8.9	8.6	7.8	8.3	7.2
Fear of failure	6.9	7.0	5.8	5.9	7.2
Extrinsic motivation	8.4	9.0	7.0	5.9	9.6
Strategic approach	11.1	11.4	10.2	10.3	9.6
Disorganised study methods	9.8	9.9	9.6	9.5	9.6
Negative attitudes to study	5.2	6.6	5.7	5.4	9.6
Achievement motivation	9.9	9.9	7.9	9.7	9.6
Comprehension learning	8.3	8.7	9.2	8.6	9.6
Globetrotting	7.7	8.6	7.3	7.7	9.6
Operation learning	11.9	11.1	10.2	10.1	9.6
Improvidence	8.9	9.2	7.0	7.6	9.6

TABLE 49

Approaches to Study Inventory: European samples (Four-factor solution showing loadings (> .30) of ASI sub-scales)

	Germany				*France*				*Belgium*				*UK (excluding OU)*				*UK (OU older students)*			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Deep Approach	46			68	56	-47	67	53	57				83		-32		67			
Inter-relating ideas	39			48	55	-36	64	37	64				76				72			
Use of evidence	42				31	-44	70	35	72				68				65			
Intrinsic motivation		-55			48	-37	69	61	76				70				58			32
Surface approach			53		73		64			36	45			50	-58	41		59	-49	-36
Syllabus-boundness	56	-31			58			39			68				-68				-56	-34
Fear of failure		-35			51	44					37			59		37		50		-33
Extrinsic motivation		32	52			58				52		-55		36		73				-37
Strategic approach	57				49	-40	43	67	47			45	61		-47		33		-39	
Disorganised study methods			72			62			-33		50	-39		63				58		-31
Negative attitudes to studying		-45				74				70				49		56		47		-41
Achievement motivation	42							61		60						38	34			
Comprehension learning				56			74		32								54	34		
Globetrotting		-47			41	40	49			38			56	60				67		
Operation learning	53				58	-54	41	45	60				47		-73				-71	
Improvidence		-67	-35		71		42	31			53			45	-59			52	-55	-31
% of Variance (Individual Factors)	42.1	30.0	20.2	7.7	55.4	29.7	8.7	6.2	40.5	31.2	17.8	10.5	43.9	37.3	10.8	8.0	43.2	36.0	14.8	6.1
% of Total Variance	49.9				66.3				56.1				63.0				55.0			

Appendix 6

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Appendix 7

Questionnaire

The following pages present a facsimile of the original questionnaire used in this survey. The reproduction has been made from a copy of the questionnaire as it was actually sent out, and so is somewhat rough throughout and faint in places.

STUDENTS' BACKGROUND AND STUDY METHODS

WHL 01 (1-5)

Please put a ring around your answer, like this (3), or, where appropriate, write your answers in the space provided.

SECTION 1 : We are pleased that you are interested in filling in this questionnaire and hope that you will first give us a few personal details which we need.

1. How old will you be by the end of 1985? *(Please write in)* → Years [ ] (6,7)

2. a) What is your sex? Male 1 (8)
Female 2

b) Your marital status? Single 1 (9)
Married 2
Other 3

3. Which of the following is nearest to your highest level of educational qualification? *(Ring one only)*

No formal qualification	1	(10,11)
RSA, CSE (except Grade 1)	2	
CSE (Grade 1), GCE 'O' levels	3	
GCE 'A' levels	4	
ONC/OND	5	
HNC/HND	6	
Teaching certificate	7	
University diploma	8	
University degree	9	
Postgraduate degree	10	

4. a) What is your present occupation / what was your occupation on retirement? (Please give as exact a job description as possible.)

_____ *For office use only* [ ] (12,13)

_____

b) Please also describe the main occupations which you had during the rest of your working life. *For office use only*

_____ [ ] (14,15)

_____ [ ] (16,17)

5. Looking back, did you enjoy your own schooling? *(Ring one only)*

Very much	1	*(18)*
On the whole	2	
Not very much	3	
Not at all	4	

6. Have you been involved in any training or futher education after leaving school:
   a) immediately or within five years?
   b) some time later (five years or more)?
   (Ring all that apply for both)

	Immediately/ soon after		Later (5 years+)	
Yes, at college	1	*(19)*	1	*(28)*
Yes, at university	1	*(20)*	1	*(29)*
Yes, leading to professional qualification	1	*(21)*	1	*(30)*
Yes, apprenticeship	1	*(22)*	1	*(31)*
Yes, leading to educational qualification	1	*(23)*	1	*(32)*
Yes, courses mainly for interest but not leading to qualifications	1	*(24)*	1	*(33)*
Yes, other work-related/vocational training	1	*(25)*	1	*(34)*
No, nothing formal	1	*(26)*	1	*(35)*
Other *(Write in)*	1	*(27)*	1	*(36)*

_____

_____

7. Was your education interrupted by any of the following?
   (Ring all that apply)

Moving home	1	*(37)*
War/national service	1	*(38)*
Lack of money	1	*(39)*
Illness (self)	1	*(40)*
Illness (family)	1	*(41)*
Marriage	1	*(42)*
Having a family	1	*(43)*
Other *(Write in)*	1	*(44)*

_____

_____

8. What subject(s) are you currently studying? *(Please write in)*

_____

_____

(45,46)

For office use only

9. Does your study lead to any formal qualification? Yes 1 *(47)*
No 2

If 'Yes', what is it? *(Please write in)*

_____ _____ [ ] *(48,49)*
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10. a) What were your reasons for wanting to study? and
b) Which was your main reason?

	Your reasons *(Ring all that apply)*		Main reason *(Ring one)*	
To continue developing as a person - stretching myself	1	*(50)*	1	*(63)*
Just wanted to keep my mind active	1	*(51)*	2	
To get a qualification	1	*(52)*	3	
To develop my interest in a particular area ..	1	*(53)*	4	
To prove something to myself	1	*(54)*	5	
Wanted to be better educated, better informed generally	1	*(55)*	6	
To find a new identity after retirement	1	*(56)*	7	
To make up for lack of opportunity or missed opportunities in the past	1	*(57)*	8	
To fill in extra leisure time	1	*(58)*	9	
To make new friends/meet congenial people	1	*(59)*	A	
Study would be a new interest	1	*(60)*	B	
To have more in common with family/friends who have studied more than me ...	1	*(61)*	C	
Other *(Write in)*.....	1	*(62)*	D	

_____

_____

11. Does undertaking study create any domestic difficulties?

No real difficulties 1 *(64)*
Yes, a few difficulties 2
Yes, many difficulties 3

If 'Yes', and you would like to tell us what sort of difficulties these were, please use this space.

_____

_____

_____

12. When this course ends, do you intend to carry on studying?

Yes, more courses of a similar type	1	(65)
Yes, but at an academically more demanding level	2	
Yes, but something totally different	3	
Yes, but informally (reading etc)	4	
Don't know	5	
Definitely not	6	

If 'Definitely not', what will you do instead of studying?

Pursue new interests	1	(66)
Pick up old interests	2	
Nothing in particular/have a rest	3	

SECTION 2 : In this section, we would like to ask you about the ways in which you organise your study. We have designed this questionnaire to cope with a very wide variety of types of study so you may find that some of the options given are irrelevant to your particular type of study.

CARD 2 (1-4) (5)

13. In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend on the following components of study? (We realise that each week will not be the same but hope that you will be able to estimate an average amount per week.)

		Hours		
a)	Reading course material		*(Please write in to the nearest hour)*	(6,7)
b)	Preparing assessed work			(8,9)
c)	Preparing non-assessed work			(10,11)
d)	In classes/tutorials			(12,13)
e)	Extra reading/private study			(14,15)
f)	Other *(please specify)*			(16,17)

14. People have different patterns of study. Please choose the most appropriate pattern from those given below and indicate the amount of time you spend each day by ringing the number in the relevant column.

	Hours per day				
	0-2 hrs	2-4 hrs	4-6 hrs	7+ hrs	
I study only one day a week	1	2	3	4	(18)
I study 2 or 3 days a week	1	2	3	4	(19)
I study 4 or 5 days a week	1	2	3	4	(20)
I study every day	1	2	3	4	(21)

15. For how long are you able to do concentrated study without taking a break? *(Ring one only)*

Less than ½ hour	1	(22)
½ - 1 hour	2	
1 - 2 hours	3	
2 - 3 hours	4	
More than 3 hours	5	

16. a) In general, do you find that you are able to keep up with the course material and/or the written work? *(Ring one only)*

Yes, I am usually on schedule	1	(23)
No, I am usually a little behind	2	
No, I am usually well behind	3	
Yes, I am usually a little ahead	4	
Yes, I am usually well ahead	5	

b) If you are usually behind schedule, what do you do?

_____

_____

_____

☐☐ (24,25)
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17. Which of the following two options most closely represents your approach to studying?

In general, I prefer to work on my own	1	(26)
I like to take every opportunity to talk to other students about my studies, in tutorials or informally	2	

18. a) Do you use any of the following aids to study?

b) Which of them is the most important to you?

	All used (Ring all that apply)		Most important (Ring one only)	
Notes in margins	1	(27)	1	(38)
Own separate written notes	1	(28)	2	
Top markers/high-lighters/underlining..	1	(29)	3	
Index cards	1	(30)	4	
Cassette recorder for notes	1	(31)	5	
Audio/video cassettes	1	(32)	6	
Home computer	1	(33)	7	
Library - local or national	1	(34)	8	
Photocopier	1	(35)	9	
Other *(please specify)*	1	(36)	A	
None of these	1	(37)	B	

19. a) Does the course you are following have a written examination? Yes 1 (39) / No 2

b) If 'Yes', how do you prepare for examinations?

	All (Ring all that apply)		Most important (Ring one only)	
I do little or no special preparation	1	(40)	1	(50)
I go through essay/assignments and tutor comments.	1	(41)	2	
I work through old exam papers	1	(42)	3	
I re-read all the course material	1	(43)	4	
I go through my notes thoroughly	1	(44)	5	
I try to discuss residual problems with my tutor..	1	(45)	6	
I try to memorise a few key facts/concepts	1	(46)	7	
I try to work out which topics are likely to come up in the exam with my tutor/and or. fellow students	1	(47)	8	
I increase my study time	1	(48)	9	
Other *(please specify - e.g. attending revision tutorials if these are provided)* ..	1	(49)	A	

SECTION 3 - In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements noted below.

Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.

4 (✓✓) means Definitely agree

3 (✓) means Agree with reservations

1 (x) means Disagree with reservations

0 (xx) means Definitely disagree

2 (?) is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.

If you accidentally circle two numbers to a question or leave a question out, we will have difficulty using any of your data, so please take care and check your answers.

CARD 3 (1-4) (5)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively	4	3	1	0	2	(6)
I try to relate ideas in one topic to those in others whenever possible	4	3	1	0	2	(7)
Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak	4	3	1	0	2	(8)
I enjoy competition : I find it stimulating	4	3	1	0	2	(9)
I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read	4	3	1	0	2	(10)
Ideas in the course (books) often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading	4	3	1	0	2	(11)
I chose my present course mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards	4	3	1	0	2	(12)
Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself	4	3	1	0	2	(13)
I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments	4	3	1	0	2	(14)
I often find myself questioning things that I read in books or see or hear on Educational TV or Radio	4	3	1	0	2	(15)
I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time	4	3	1	0	2	(16)
The continual pressure of study - deadlines and competition - often makes me tense and depressed	4	3	1	0	2	(17)
I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem : I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go	4	3	1	0	2	(18)

	//	✓	x	xx	?	
My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of the course (term)	4	3	1	0	2	(19)
It's important to me to do really well in the course	4	3	1	0	2	(20)
The materials seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated	4	3	1	0	2	(21)
Distractions make it difficult for me to concentrate on my studies	4	3	1	0	2	(22)
When I'm doing written work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular Tutor seems to want	4	3	1	0	2	(23)
I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read	4	3	1	0	2	(24)
The course materials and the Tutor sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints	4	3	1	0	2	(25)
In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution	4	3	1	0	2	(26)
My main reason for studying is that it will help me to get a better job	4	3	1	0	2	(27)
Often I find myself wondering whether the study I am doing is really worthwhile	4	3	1	0	2	(28)
I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult	4	3	1	0	2	(29)
I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised	4	3	1	0	2	(30)
A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic	4	3	1	0	2	(31)
I prefer to follow well tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous	4	3	1	0	2	(32)
I'm rather slow at getting down to study	4	3	1	0	2	(33)
In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply	4	3	1	0	2	(34)
When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later	4	3	1	0	2	(35)
I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far	4	3	1	0	2	(36)
I chose this course more from the way it fits in with career plans than from my own interests	4	3	1	0	2	(37)
I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(38)
When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer	4	3	1	0	2	(39)
I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking	4	3	1	0	2	(40)
Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them	4	3	1	0	?	(41)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them	4	3	1	0	2	(42)
I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting evidence or findings	4	3	1	0	2	(43)
My main reason for studying is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me	4	3	1	0	2	(44)
In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow	4	3	1	0	2	(45)
I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn	4	3	1	0	2	(46)
It is important to me to do things better than my friends and relations if I possibly can	4	3	1	0	2	(47)
I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way	4	3	1	0	2	(48)
Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own	4	3	1	0	2	(49)
One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying	4	3	1	0	2	(50)
I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials	4	3	1	0	2	(51)
I find that studying my course can often be really exciting and gripping	4	3	1	0	2	(52)
The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions	4	3	1	0	2	(53)
I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through	4	3	1	0	2	(54)
I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper	4	3	1	0	2	(55)
Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture	4	3	1	0	2	(56)
I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing written work	4	3	1	0	2	(57)
Having to speak in class is quite an ordeal for me	4	3	1	0	2	(58)
Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly where you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion	4	3	1	0	2	(59)
I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in classes	4	3	1	0	2	(60)
I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together	4	3	1	0	2	(61)
I seem to be a bit too ready to jump to conclusions without waiting for all the evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(62)
I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters	4	3	1	0	2	(63)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I think it is important to look at problems rationally and logically without making intuitive jumps	4	3	1	0	2	(64)
I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the materials presented them	4	3	1	0	2	(65)
When I'm reading an article or research report, I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified	4	3	1	0	2	(66)
The Tutor seems to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas	4	3	1	0	2	(67)
When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to join this centre/college	4	3	1	0	2	(68)
I find my study so interesting, I should like to continue with them after I finish this course	4	3	1	0	2	(69)

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. We would also welcome any personal comments you may wish to make about the ways you've studied and your experience of study over the years. If you would like to make additional comments, please use the rest of this space, or attach an extra sheet of paper.